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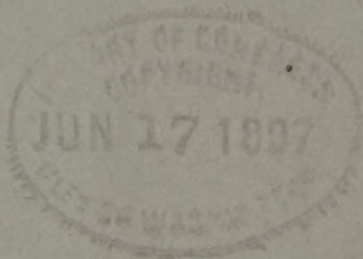
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# AN AMERICAN CAVALIER

BY

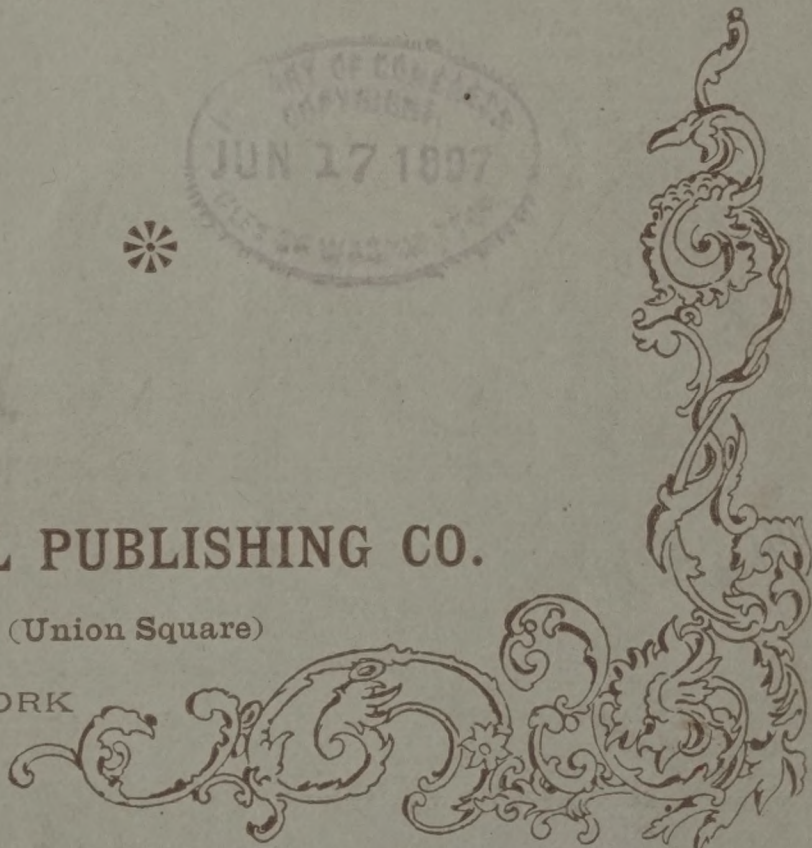
**WILLIAM C. HUDSON****(Barclay North)**

*Author of "The Diamond Button: Whose Was It?" "Jack Gordon, Knight-Errant, Gotham, 1883," "Vivier, of Vivier, Longman & Co.," "The Man with a Thumb," "On the Rack," "The Dugdale Millions," "Should She Have Left Him?" etc., etc.*

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# AN AMERICAN CAVALIER

*A NOVEL*

BY ✓

WILLIAM C. HUDSON

AUTHOR OF "THE DIAMOND BUTTON," "JACK GORDON," "VIVIER,"  
"THE MAN WITH A THUMB," "ON THE RACK," "THE  
DUGDALE MILLIONS," "SHOULD SHE  
HAVE LEFT HIM?" ETC.

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# AN AMERICAN CAVALIER.

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## BOOK I.

### *THE PROBLEM.*

---

#### CHAPTER I.

##### “SCHEMES O’ MICE AND MEN.”

It was a motley throng, in which the foreign element predominated.

Moreover it was an impatient throng, for *La Touraine*, for which it waited on this bright morning in the early summer of 1893, was slow in warping into her berth.

The huge steamer, after the unrestrained freedom of her dash across the great water waste, in her voyage from Havre, seemed to be resisting efforts to put restrictions on her liberty, like a mettlesome horse, quivering with the joy and excitement of a swift gallop over the turf, refusing to be stabled.



This throng was uncomfortable as well as motley; the overspreading roof and the sides, except where they were pierced with openings, made the wharf dark and drear, for the sun, however bright outside, did not penetrate to relieve the dampness which wilted collars and made light clothes heavy. Moreover it was given little rest, for, from time to time, the 'longshoremen and the wharfingers elbowed it from place to place, what time the drivers of heavy trucks, passing and re-passing, jealous of their rights of way, did not compel it to seek safety between piled-up boxes and barrels by loud shouts and many oaths.

Close to that opening in which, inquiry had informed them, the broad gangway for the descent of passengers from the steamer slowly approaching would be placed, stood two foreigners, who rarely spoke to each other, but who were stealthily observant of all things occurring about them, and who carefully scrutinized all faces their eyes could reach.

The few words they did exchange discovered that they were Russians. An ethnologist might have read their nationality in their faces, probably would have done so readily; but the ordinary person, judging them, as is the wont, rather by their clothes than by their features, would have said they were Frenchmen, since Paris had put its stamp on their garments, and especially



as they were waiting the incoming of a French steamer.

A short distance away, concealed by a mound of barrels, one of which at the end of a row he had rolled over so as to make a space through which he could peer unobserved, stood a man of middle age, unmistakably an Italian. Well dressed, he was evidently of a grade superior to those of his countrymen who, in recent years, have supplanted the Irish laborers as the "navvies" of the nation, yet something about him suggested to experienced eyes the trusted domestic of higher position in families of circumstance. He wore plain gold rings in his ears. Except when he turned with eager, all-expectant air to look behind him, which was frequently, his eyes were upon the two Russians, who were evidently unaware of his presence.

The weary watching and waiting were relieved, at least so far as our Italian was concerned, by the approach of two of his countrymen—great hulking fellows, beetle-browed, who, with their naturalization, had taken on the swagger and hitching shoulders of the Bowery—formidable looking fellows, whom one would have preferred to meet on the pavements of Broadway with a policeman in sight, rather than in a dark alley under the cover of the night.

But our watchful Italian greeted them with



manifest relief and satisfaction. He exchanged a few rapid words with them, gave them some money in little packages, at which he did not look—denoting that the payment was in consequence of prearrangement—and drawing them close to the opening in the mound of barrels he had made, pointed out the two Russians he had been watching. Then he gave them some instructions, to which they were keenly attentive, and to their comprehension of which they testified by short, quick nods of the head. This done, he motioned them away vigorously.

Withdrawing, and separating immediately, the two men took up stations where they could closely observe the Russians while they appeared to be only idlers. In the meantime, the attention of the watchful Italian was attracted by an altercation between a policeman on duty at the pier and the driver of a hack, who was endeavoring to turn his horses' heads to the street. Quickly gliding to the side of the officer, the Italian slipped a bill into the hand of that functionary, saying in tolerable English:

“That is my carriage, and I would crave the favor that it should stand here.”

The officer, with a presence of mind born of long experience, and frequent practice perhaps, without abating in the slightest his tone of authority, as his fingers closed on the bill, con-



tinued to direct the movements of the driver, with this difference only, that, while heretofore his orders had been to the end of sending the hack up the pier, they were now such as finally placed the vehicle in a more eligible spot than the driver had been striving to attain. Having accommodated this matter, which he seemed to regard as important, the Italian turned to go back to his point of observation, but was immediately made aware that the altercation had served to attract the attention of the Russians, for one was clearly, if stealthily, pointing out the Italian to his companion. So our friend with the rings in his ears made no further effort to escape the observation of the Russians.

By this time the great ship was nearly in place. The two Russians separated; one taking his stand on the stringpiece on one side of the opening and the other on the opposite side, from which points they could not fail to see the faces of all the passengers descending from the ship.

The Italian stood immediately in front of the opening, heedless of the orders of the officer to clear a space for the gangway. As soon as it was placed in position he sprang forward, displaying a card to the officer stationed at the foot, nodding, and smiling, and in a moment was on the deck, where he again displayed his card to an officer of the ship. That officer, glancing at it carelessly,



nodded, and the Italian pushed his way among the passengers who were crowding about.

These movements were not lost upon the Russians, who signaled to each other.

Beyond the circle of passengers crowding about the gangway and near the door opening upon the companion way, stood a lady, looking anxiously toward the wharf—a lady upon whose face were not only anxiety, but perplexity and apprehension—a lady whose distinction was proclaimed in her carriage; whose high claims to blond beauty were not to be denied nor gauged by classical standards, and whose tall form, slight and willowy to elegance, was yet commanding.

Perceiving the lady from a distance the Italian hastened to her, and, bowing low, announced his presence by a single word:

“Madame!”

The lady turned quickly. If her face was beautiful when clouded by perplexity and apprehension, it was indescribably charming when irradiated by the glad light that leaped into her eyes, and the smile which dimpled her cheeks and chin.

“Pietro!” she exclaimed, her tone evincing her joy at seeing him.

They talked rapidly in French, and with facility, though it was plain that it was the native tongue of neither, but probably because it was common ground on which they could meet.



"Come!" she said. "We will go. I am but an indifferent sailor, and would leave the ship as soon as possible."

"Mme. la Comtesse will listen to me?" asked the Italian, whom she had called Pietro, in a tone of utmost respect.

"Indeed, yes," replied the lady with animation. "The only one of my retinue who has proved faithful to me! Why not?"

Pietro, bowing low, said, still in French:

"There are on the wharf two men of madame's nation. I have seen them in Paris about madame's hotel—only two days before I left Paris on madame's orders, for this country. They watch for somebody. I fear it is for madame, by the orders of——"

The lady interrupted Pietro as an expression of fear, even terror, stole over her face. Clutching the arm of Pietro in her agitation, she exclaimed:

"My God, even here already, and I am but arrived!"

"Mme. la Comtesse must not distress herself," said Pietro quickly, in a confident yet respectful and sympathetic tone. "Pietro will baffle her enemies, and the city of New York is not like London even, for it is easily done. Every precaution is taken."

The lady, reassured, cast a grateful glance upon her servant.



"Then are we to go now?" she asked, apparently putting herself unreservedly into Pietro's hands.

"When we have had madame's baggage examined and put into the carriage. She cannot have much?" he said inquiringly.

"No; a trunk and a satchel."

"Madame's trunks and cases that I brought over with me are already in the house I have selected for madame's residence."

"And if there are spies here, they know that already," said the countess; but it was tentatively.

"Madame would reproach me for want of care," replied Pietro. "I am sure nothing is known. His spies did not even know I was in this country until they saw me here to-day."

"Then my departure from Paris was known?"

"It could not be otherwise."

"No, Pietro," she said, "I reproach you for nothing but devotion to a woman followed by misfortune." She laid her hand upon his and smiled adorably.

Pietro bowed, highly pleased, and said:

"Madame is known at the house as Mme. Thompson!"

"Ah, yes! That was the name chosen."

"Does Mathilde accompany madame?"

"No," replied the lady, speaking with asperity for the first time. "Like all the rest, except you,



my faithful Pietro, my maid was a spy upon me in the pay of——"

This time it was Pietro who repressed utterance of the name.

"It is best to mention no names. May I have the keys, so that I can have the examination made?"

The lady handed him the keys, and Pietro left her, saying "I will return soon." The countess found a chair where, somewhat secluded, she could sit.

As Pietro passed down the gangway to the wharf, he was sensible that his reappearance caused signals between the two Russians, who still maintained their posts of observation. Reaching the wharf he cast a quick glance about him and, satisfied that his countrymen were there, began the search for his mistress' trunk and satchel.

The search was soon ended and, securing an examination, he had the trunk and satchel conveyed to the hack in waiting for him, and returned to the lady.

Together, with no effort at concealment, they descended the gangway, the lady on the arm of her servant, to the suppressed excitement of the two Russians, who exchanged almost imperceptible signals of recognition of the person for whom they had waited.

Immediately they left their posts. One went



to a carriage standing near by, and spoke briefly to the driver; it must have been in directing attention to Pietro's coach, for the driver looked at it attentively. The other Russian followed leisurely, a short distance behind Pietro and the countess.

The Italian helped the lady into the coach and, without a word of instruction to his driver, sprang in and slammed the door, whereupon the driver touched up his horses into as smart a gait as the crowded condition of the pier warranted.

The Russian who had followed them turned quickly and ran to the coach by the side of which his companion was standing, but immediately came into violent contact with a man running at full speed. Together they fell, rolling on the floor of the wharf, the Russian underneath and unable to regain his feet. The other Russian, realizing the accident his companion had met with, immediately sprang to his coach-door, but, singularly, just as he was about to step in, another running man struck him, stumbled, and to save himself caught the Russian by the waist, with the result of also bringing him to the floor.

By the time either could regain their feet, the coach containing Pietro and the countess had passed beyond the possibility of pursuit.

The two Russians met at the door of their coach crestfallen, their driver looking down upon them with a broad grin. The two Italians were there



too, one of them making abject apologies, and the other declaring loudly and volubly that he had been interrupted in a pursuit.

The two Russians heeded them not, but one said to the other:

"It was well done."

"The Italian is very clever," replied the other.

They then entered their coach and were driven away slowly.



## CHAPTER II.

### PRINCE KROUPIEVE.

DIPLOMAT and statesman; favorite and confidant of his Imperial Master, Alexander; ruler of a principality, one half of which he owned, Prince Alexis Kroupiève looked it all.

In the summer of 1893 this Russian nobleman of high distinction and great power was a visitor also to the United States. Rumor credited him with vast and special powers from the Czar anent the treaty at that time pending between the two countries. If it were so, presentation of that mission had not been made to our foreign department, and our government had no official knowledge of either the coming or the presence of the distinguished person. The Russian embassy maintained an inviolable taciturnity, but treated the illustrious visitor with almost royal honors.

On a certain day late in July Prince Kroupiève occupied luxurious apartments in one of those large hotels clustering about the main entrance of Central Park, in this great metropolis of ours. At the moment of his introduction to the reader he was seated in a large easy-chair near the center



of the room, a small table drawn up at his elbow, which was littered with papers and letters; but with these papers, however, he was less concerned than with the man standing, much embarrassed, in front of him a few feet away.

But if Maurice Hanford, chief of Hanford's Detective Agency, as he proudly announced on all proper occasions, was embarrassed, he was yet far more angry, a fact indifferently noted by the prince, but most carefully by Rodion Michaelovitch, warily watching from his station near the windows, and with alarm, for Rodion, during his seven weeks' residence in this country, had observed, with no little bewilderment, that the average American displayed an independence that resented an address such as Prince Kroupiève was accustomed to employ toward those whom he regarded his inferiors.

Rodion, who was man of confidence, ready and prompt servant, chief of spies, anything of service needed to Prince Kroupiève, in fact, doubted whether the average American regarded himself as inferior to anybody; therefore, concealing his alarm, he stood with his hand in his pocket grasping a revolver, prepared to go to the defense of his master, should that master's tone and words goad the average American, Hanford, into an overt act of violence.

It might have been supposed that under such



circumstances Rodion, having been in this country much longer, and therefore better informed than his master, would have advised the prince to adopt a different address; but to advise was something Rodion did not dream of doing; to obey and to defend the prince was his duty. So it was that he watched, ready to act if necessity required interference.

“So,” continued the prince, magnificent displeasure on his face, and with that precise and deliberate enunciation marking the foreigner, more learned in the language he uses than practiced in its speech, “so, after five weeks, with ample means at your command, you report that the person sought for cannot be found; that you do not know, even, that she is in this city or has left it—even that she is in this country or has left it. Surely, sir, you are a very accurate hound!”

“That’s a fact,” replied Hanford doggedly. “I don’t know whether she ever came to the city.”

“My good sir,” said the prince with increased contempt, “*my* spies had not difficulty in watching her embark from that port in France, nor in watching her land in this city of New York of yours.”

The emphasis, suggesting that Hanford was merely a spy, differing only from those possessed by the prince in being less shrewd and efficient, stung the detective into this retort:



“Then such fly spies as yours should have followed her until they knew where she planted herself.”

“They naturally supposed that the very efficient police of this great city would inform itself of the presence of a stranger, at least of her distinction,” replied the prince haughtily, and in a tone implying censure of the police authorities.

Hanford had not a high opinion of the efficiency of the police force,—had not had, indeed, since that day when the authorities had permitted so valuable a member of the detective bureau as himself to sever his relations with it without protest,—but his anger and resentment drove him to its defense, and at the same time to a declaration of patriotism.

“See here, sir,” he said sternly, recovering from his embarrassment as he lost his temper, “America isn’t Russia, by a long shot. The police here, nor anywhere else in this broad country, don’t spy after people doing no wrong and under no suspicion. There is no complaint, no charge, no warning against this woman, from any government or police of any country. *You* don’t make any charge. All there is of it is that you want to locate her. There’s such a thing as liberty in this country, and if you’re going to stay here long, you want to learn that right away. It ’ll save you a lot of trouble.”



“And increase my difficulties,” sneered the prince, while Rodion was horrified at the bold reply.

“I don’t know anything about your difficulties, and I don’t care; but I do know you insult every American citizen when you think anything else.”

“Enough! Silence, dog!” haughtily commanded the prince.

“Stop that!” angrily replied the detective. “I am no more of a dog than you are. Calling people dogs may do where you come from, if they’ll let you. But I won’t, and you won’t find many here that will, either.”

The counter command, utterly beyond the experience of the Russian nobleman, so much astonished him that he was not even angered, and while he stared at this unheard-of specimen of humanity, Hanford, feeling that he had sufficiently declared the manhood of the general American, passed on to a declaration of his own particular manhood, growing very doubtful in his grammar:

“And I want you to understand that I am none of your dirty spies. I’m a detective, I am, doing a straight business, and I’m beginnin’ to have big doubts whether this ’ere job of yours is straight or not.”

“Enough!” commanded the prince, and turning to Rodion, said, “Pay him what he demands.”



“I demand nothing,” promptly retorted Hanford, so angry as to lose all sense of gain. “If you’ve got any good of my five weeks’ work, you’re welcome to it. I make you a present of it, and drop the job. But as I believe you’re up to no good yourself, I’m goin’ to keep an eye on you. Good-morning!”

And the champion of American manhood and American detectives took himself and his manhood out of the room, strode angrily down the stairs, and, pausing only to warn the clerk at the desk that he’d better look after the fellow calling himself Prince Kroupiève, as he (Hanford) had “crossed” on him, and didn’t believe he was any good, walked out of the hotel and out of this story at one and the same moment.

As the door closed upon Hanford, the prince rose from his chair and paced up and down the room, deep in thought, the while Rodion stood at the window motionless, patiently awaiting the prince’s pleasure.

It is to be feared that Hanford’s expressed opinion of the prince was born solely of his anger—anger caused by the arrogant and contemptuous treatment he had received. Certainly the appearance and manner of the prince did not warrant it. Surely, in every motion he carried the air of dignity, consequence, authority, and distinction of the man accustomed to the deference



of his fellow-men, and to power and the exercise of it. About him was the atmosphere of a great world, and his haughtiness, ingrained as it was, was the haughtiness of conscious superiority. But that his features were too hard and rugged, and animated by a cruel and cynical expression, he would have been called handsome. Even the sneer which lurked habitually under his black, waxed, and pointed mustache could not lessen the dignity of his face, and no man would deny that high spirit and determination were essential characteristics of the man, nor that the habit of command sat well upon him.

Suddenly he turned from his pacing up and down, upon his patient attendant.

“Ha, Rodion!” he exclaimed.

“Yes, master,” was the submissive reply.

“You have had an example of the liberty which the babes drink in with their milk in this favored land.”

The habitual sneer became more marked.

“Liberty, with its attendant consequence—  
independence—that permits a spy to insult his superior, and denies the superior the right of immediate punishment. Liberty, independence, justice! Great are thy names!”

“There are no superiors here,” modestly commented Rodion.

“True, Rodion Michaelovitch! All are base-



born, even the very rich man at whose palace in Newport I dined last week. But stop! It is the inferiors who are the superiors; the superiors are the inferiors."

"In what way, master?"

"In all ways—in sarcasm or sincerity. What I find is this: The lower classes, and what they call here the great middle class, have no reverence for rank. It is the rich alone who prostrate themselves before the person of rank, whom idleness or affairs of nations drift to their shores, envying the titles their stern republican constitution denies them. Pah!"

He crossed the room to the windows and looked out as he added:

"There is more respect for the fellow who has just left us, for he really believes in his equality. He is your true American republican."

He was silent at the window as he watched the throng passing up and down.

"It is wonderful!" finally he remarked, rather to himself than to his attendant. "This swarming multitude, alike prosperous in appearance. No poverty, no classes, no distinctions! They go up and down and the authorities take no heed. Men come from all the world, and no one says to them: 'Who are you?' 'Why do you come here?' 'What is your business?' 'Where are you going?' Men go out of the country into all



the world, and no one asks: 'For what purpose?' I am told that there are in this great city, every night, one hundred and twenty-five thousand strangers, and the Government does not know that they are here—not even the name of one of them, nor where they come from, nor where they go to. Not one of them does the Government dare to question, unless he has committed crime, or there is strong proof that he has. The Government exists by the consent and selection of the governed, and yet it is strong. Is the republican right, after all?"

"It would not do for Russia."

"Yet the Russian emigrates to this country, becomes a citizen, is presented with the same freedom, and is one of them, scrupulously obeying their laws and customs—as good a citizen as the rest. Let us be philosophical. We condemn the theory, and hold freedom to be dangerous; yet here, where liberty is guaranteed, property is protected, life is safe, the bomb an incident punished almost with ferocity when discovered, the country grows in population and wealth beyond any nation on earth, and there is no anarchy."

"And no Siberia," quietly remarked Rodion.

The prince regarded Rodion contemplatively.

"And no privilege for class. *I* cannot find the Countess Naletoff, though I am convinced she is in this city."



“In St. Petersburg we would know within twenty-four hours every inmate of every house. But here, liberty not only does not know, but prevents the search.”

“Yes; liberty defeats me, the representative of absolutism. But Alexis Kroupiève will not be defeated. The prince, diplomat, representative of imperial powers may be, but not Alexis, the man and politician. Money and energy can do as much in the land of liberty as in the land of absolutism.”

He crossed the room to a table on which there was a curiously mounted box, from which, after unlocking it with a key from his chain, and opening it, he took a photograph. Calling Michaelovitch to him, he said:

“Have as many copies of this made as is necessary. Fill the city with spies. Give each one a copy, and let the opera, the theaters, restaurants, hotels, shops, the railroad stations, the cars, the streets, the drives, the parks, the parades, be haunted night and day until she is found.”

“And when she is—what then? She cannot be seized.”

“Not yet. There is a way to be made, but not yet. Found, she shall be watched every moment, until the prince, the representative of imperial power, has found the way not now possible. Go, then, on this business, Rodion Michaelovitch.



But stop! Admit the Dale; I have business with him."

He laughed low and contemptuously.

"Dale! Another shrewd American citizen, who laughs at spies, and does not know that I employ him as one of mine."

Michaelovitch patiently waited for further remark, but, hearing none, bowed low and left the room. The prince walked to the window, looked out a moment, and, turning, spoke aloud:

"Money, energy, and patience will accomplish my desire. No, beautiful Countess of Naletoff, you cannot escape your destiny, though you fly Russia, and hide under the folds of the Stars and Stripes. The arms of Alexis Kroupiève are long and his power wide."

The door opened, and there entered a person who presented in himself contradictions. If the snow-white hair curling crisply and closely over his head, and the snow-white mustache elaborately curled at the ends, suggested the dignity of years, his tall, slight, elegant figure, the vivacity of his manner, the extreme youthfulness of the fashion of his clothes, and the gayety of his speech contradicted the suggestion, and left the observer puzzled to know whether he was a youthful old man or a youthful man prematurely old.

"Ah, Dale!" cried the prince, his tone and manner changing instantly upon the entrance of



his caller, who with easy, yet respectful, familiarity dropped into a low chair. "I greet you with pleasure, my friend Dale. This heat, so excessive, affects you not—so fresh, so cool."

"Fresh I may be, prince—undoubtedly am; but cool—I repel the idea as a base insinuation of flattery, and accept it as a tribute to my costume, especially contrived to delude spectators and deceive myself. No, Your Serene Highness, I am warm; and I must cut this hot town and seek my brother-in-law, which, being liberally interpreted into intelligible English, means a cool country house by the water-side."

"Ha!" said the prince, seating himself in the chair where we found him when this chapter opened. "Let me send for a cigar and a cooling drink."

He made a motion as if to touch a bell on the table at his side, but Dale vivaciously put up both hands in protest.

"Don't!" he cried; "I never smoke until after lunch, nor drink until after dinner."

"Ha! Wherefore the years pass over your head with no touch of their withering frost?"

"But a heavy fall of snow," replied Dale with a laugh, laying his hand on his hair.

"But who is this brother-in-law. I have not heard of him—this brother-in-law, for whom you would forsake me?"



“Forsake you, prince—never! Yet something is due to one’s family, if he possesses such a necessary appendage to respectability. I have been back in this country three weeks, after three years’ absence, and have not put in an appearance to inform it that its ornament is alive and kicking.”

The prince looked up with a surprised and amused expression.

“Kicking,” continued Dale, replying to the expression on his host’s face, “is not to be taken literally. It is a bit of American slang, indicating in a brief and expressive manner that I am vigorous and in health. Besides, I have a dear girl of a daughter I have yearnings to see.”

“Ah, ha! A young lady, of course?”

“Not yet, thank Heaven!”

“And the brother-in-law—you have not told me about him. What is he?”

“Considered as to himself, a dear, good, generous fellow, of whom I am very fond. Considered as to his profession, a lawyer of high standing, great distinction, and brilliant abilities, with a trace of eccentricity quite as marked as in your sparkling friend who is discussing him. Considered as to his aspirations—like yourself, a diplomat.”

“Ha! Then he is in public life?”

“As we all are in this country. But my brother-



in-law relies less upon his public services for advancement than upon his distinction as an advocate, and—which is far more to the point—his intimate friendship with the Secretary of State—Williams, his chum at college.”

The prince turned upon Dale slowly a shrewd, penetrative glance, but Dale was oblivious, for at the moment he was straightening out the bow of blue ribbon on his white straw hat.

The prince languidly picked, from the table at his elbow, a paper, over which he cast a careless glance and put it back.

“And his name is what?” he asked.

“Chester K. Harlowe.”

“Chester K. Harlowe,” repeated the prince languidly. “That is singular!”

“What—the name?”

“By no means. Nothing is singular in this singular country. No; but a distinguished lawyer of that name, of the firm of Harlowe & Marsters, was recommended to me.”

“That is my brother-in-law, by George!”

“Ha! Then I have a mission for *you* to perform—a mission which will comport with your desire to cut this hot city.”

“Your missions are commands,” replied Dale airily.

“I am engaged in an enterprise of vast moment in this country, which has as yet not been re-



vealed. In that enterprise I must have the assistance of a lawyer. Mr. Harlowe has been recommended to me as the very man who would serve the purpose. I would have you go to him and prepare the way for an interview with him. You will inform him of my rank and dignities and the confidence I enjoy at the court of St. Petersburg, and will use the influence which your near relation to him gives you to induce him to accept my offer."

"And the business on which you wish him to engage?"

The prince, reassuming his grand air, rose and said haughtily:

"That I will myself inform him when I meet him."

Dale, slightly coloring over the intimation conveyed that he was seeking to penetrate affairs purposely concealed from him, accepted the speech and manner as a dismissal. With something of a loss of his easy and graceful familiarity he replied:

"I will go upon your mission to-day, prince. I bid you good-morning."

"One moment," said the Prince. "The address of Mr. Harlowe is what?"

"During these summer months at his country house at Edgemere, on Long Island Sound, near Northport."



"I will myself go to Northport to await the result of your mission."

Dale turned to go, but was again detained by the prince, who, crossing to the box from which he had taken the photograph he had given to Michaelovitch, took from it, apparently without counting, a roll of bills, returning to Dale.

"There are expenses to be borne," he said, extending the money.

Under an impulse which Dale could not have analyzed, if he had tried, but probably due to the hauteur, so unusual, with which he had been treated by the prince, Dale made a protest by a gesture.

"No," said the prince peremptorily, "take it."

Then, with a smile and a graciousness that put Dale more at his ease, he added:

"Russia cannot afford to be other than well represented by its agents."

Dale took the money, bowed, bade the prince good-morning, and left the room.

"Oh, words, words, words!" ejaculated the prince when alone. "That light-headed fool would have been insulted had I used the word spy. But with agent, meaning the same thing, he is flattered and honored."



## CHAPTER III.

### AN HUMBLE AMBASSADOR.

THE legal firm of Harlowe & Marsters was one of the most respected in the city, and had its offices in Wall Street.

Mr. Harlowe was the more conspicuous member, known as a brilliant advocate, and widely recognized as a formidable trial lawyer.

The voice of Mr. Marsters was rarely heard in the courts, but in legal circles it was said the solidity of learning of the firm and its great constructive power in the building up and preparation of cases were possessed by him. Studious, precise, accurate, with powers of vast and patient labor, he lacked the qualities which had made his partner celebrated.

If Harlowe was brilliant, he was erratic; if eloquent, not always strong in judgment; if fertile in expedients, ready in resources, prompt in adapting himself to emergencies, he was wanting in powers of application and utterly incapable of drudgery. With a marvelous grasp of mind he seized upon the various parts of a case when



everything was prepared for him by Marsters, in all their bearings and relations, and no one could do more with the materials when they were given him. Once engaged in a trial, he was transformed; but the spur of excitement and action was necessary to call forth the powers of his mind, and then all was at his disposal.

A power at his desk, strong in counsel and conference, Marsters was a weakling on his feet, for, slow and methodical in his processes, he was easily disconcerted.

Together they made one great lawyer, and their brother members of the bar said that they worked together like perfectly adjusted pieces of machinery—utterly useless if separated—and that, if one died or retired from practice, the other, perforce, would be compelled to abandon the law; and that, in short, they had become thoroughly correlated and were interdependent.

Both were bachelors, and as warm friends as they were close partners. And Marsters exercised a fatherly care over Harlowe and his affairs, glorying in his abilities and troubled by his eccentricities.

One day, about a week before we met the prince, a foreigner called at the office of the firm in Wall Street and asked for Mr. Harlowe. As it was the long vacation, most of the clerks were away, and, between the hours of one and two,



those who were yet on duty at the office were out at their luncheons.

A young lad of fourteen or fifteen was in possession, and at the moment of the entrance of the stranger was engaged in dropping ink on flies struggling for release from the fly-paper on which they had been caught. Neither desisting from his humane employment, nor even turning to look upon the caller, the lad to the inquiry gave rapid and indifferent reply:

“Not in; don’t know w’en he will; not this summer; never comes w’en de courts aint sittin’.”

The reply was not only disappointing, but disconcerting to the caller. He stood still so long that the lad turned to see what had become of him. And seeing him standing there with bended head, the lad vouchsafed the further information:

“Mr. Harlowe is up to his country place—Edgemere.”

The stranger turned to the door, and turned back again, as if undecided what course to pursue, and, in doing so, discovered to the lad that he wore in his ears gold rings.

The lad was instantly interested. This was something new and odd in his observation, and so he determined that the stranger should not depart until he had further investigated the phenomena. He detained the object of his curiosity by a question:



“Does youse want to see him particular?”

The stranger nodded his head earnestly.

“Well,” said the lad, walking about the room, in order to satisfy himself that he wore rings in both ears, “you’ll hev’ to go up to his house to ’im. He don’t never come here in de summer time.”

The man turned hopelessly to the door.

“Say!” asked the lad, “won’t Misser Bentley ’tend to yer biz’nis?”

“Messer-a Bent—?” repeated the man in a tone of wondering curiosity, and discovering foreign accent.

“One of our clerks—students—he tends to a hull lot of Harlowe’s biz’nis w’en he aint here.”

“No,” replied the foreigner, “the busanis is-a mos’ import. No-a clerk can-a ’tend.”

“Well, say! Mr. Marsters is here to-day.”

“Who-a is the Misstare Marsters?”

“Why, say, he’s the boss of the office—Misser Harlowe’s partner.”

“Ah!” An expression of relief swept over his face as he asked eagerly:

“Can-a I see him?”

“I dunno,” said the lad, “but I’ll find out.”

Disappearing behind a door, he quickly reappeared, saying:

“Misser Marsters will see you. Come in.”

As the foreigner stepped briskly forward,



the office lad, whose curiosity was too great to be repressed, detained him with a question:

“ Say! ” he asked, pointing with his ink-stained finger, “ say, what do you wear them things for? ”

For a moment the foreigner failed to understand Joe, but realizing, he was staggered. Then he regained self-possession, laughed, and answered good-humoredly:

“ Don’t-a they look-a pretty? ”

“ Hully gee, pretty! ” exclaimed the lad as he led the foreigner through a room filled with desks, but at the time unoccupied by any person, and ushered him into a smaller one, in which, at a desk in the corner, a middle-aged gentleman was poring over some papers.

He pointed to a chair beside him, without lifting his head, and said:

“ Take a seat. ”

Concluding the reading of the page on which he was engaged when interrupted, and laying it out of his hand, with a swift, scanning glance he asked pleasantly:

“ Well, sir, what can I do for you? ”

The man, somewhat embarrassed notwithstanding the pleasant address of the lawyer, hesitated a moment before he replied:

“ It-a is nothing for-a me, ” he finally said, “ but for Her Highness the Countess Naletoff. ”

Attracted by the name and title, unusual to his



ears, and by the respectful tone of the mention, the lawyer again swiftly scanned the face of his visitor, and determined his nationality.

“Ah!” he said, “the lady is from Italy.”

“No, signor”—he corrected himself promptly—“No, sare, she is a Russian. I am an Italian.”

“Ah!” The lawyer waited for the stranger to disclose his business, which did not seem so easy from his hesitation. But after a moment or two he went on:

“You are-a Mistare Marsters?”

“Yes.”

“The part-aner of-a Mistare Har-lowe?”

“Yes.”

“It was-a to see-a him I-a come.”

Mr. Marsters looked at the door on the other side of the room, on which was painted the name of Harlowe, and said:

“Mr. Harlowe is rarely here in the summer months,” and he added in an undertone: “And may never be here again.”

If the foreigner heard the added remark, he did not heed it.

“I heard of-a Mistare Haralowe, by a countryman of-a mine. He was very kind to-a my countryman—Carlo Carvolla.”

“Oh, yes!” said Mr. Marsters. “I remember the case.”

And he recalled it as one of those quixotic



affairs of Harlowe, who had taken the case through sympathy and paid all the costs himself.

“He-a saved my countryman from-a being robbed.”

Mr. Marsters bowed in acquiescence, and asked:

“Is this a similar case?”

“Oh, no, sare!” replied the Italian quickly.

“But-a my countryman a-say, Mistare Haralowe is so good-a man, and so great-a man, that I-a ’vise Mme. la Comtesse to consult him, and she-a send me to see-a him.”

“Well,” said Mr. Marsters, leaning back in his chair, wishing that his visitor would come to the point without so long an introduction, “Mr. Harlowe is not here. If you will tell me the business of the lady, I will listen, and, if nothing more, tell Mr. Harlowe. I see him every evening.”

The eyes of the Italian glistened with pleasure; he evidently had been afraid that Mr. Marsters would not; and Mr. Marsters, watching him closely, mentally recorded the impression that the man before him was a kindly and true man.

“It is ver-a import. Would not the gentleman call upon Mme. la Comtesse?”

“Who? Mr. Harlowe?”

“No, sare. Mistare Mar-asters?”

The lawyer was surprised, and bluntly asked:

“Why can’t she come here?”

The Italian smiled deprecatingly upon Mr.



Marsters, spread his hands, and shrugged his shoulders, as if craving his indulgence.

“Mme. la Comtesse is *la grande dame*—a lady of the highest a-rank, not accustom to the-a ways of America. It is deefecult to-a make her understand that-a people-a go, not-a come in this countray.”

The expression with which he looked upon Mr. Marsters as he completed his sentence was one of mute appeal to the lawyer to concede his rights to the ignorance of the lady as to the customs of the country. Mr. Marsters saw the situation as in a flash light.

“Ah! What is your name?”

“It is nothing,” replied the Italian, meaning that he was of no importance. “Pietro Martani.”

“Are you her man of business?”

“Oh, no, sare! Merely a servant, who came with madame from France.”

Mr. Marsters was puzzled. Noting the expression on the lawyer’s face, the Italian hastened to say, and pleadingly:

“Madame is alone. She has no one to advise but Pietro. She is friendless; in much trouble, but very rich. A great man does give her much trouble. She ran away from Russia—from France—to escape them. In very great trouble, signor! She weep and pull her hands, signor, and the heart of Pietro ache for her. She-a know not



what-a to do. So I say see the good Mistare Har-alowe. And at last she cry, 'Go, good Pietro, go bring him.' I come."

Mr. Marsters was interested and even curious. Yielding to an impulse, something most unusual in him, he decided to go, excusing his determination on the ground, if he did not, Harlowe would, and it were better for him to examine the ground first, thus perhaps saving Harlowe from the clutches of an adventuress. So he asked:

"Where is she?"

"Up-a town, in Lexington Ave. She live retired—afraid to go out. She-a live by the name of Mme. Thompson."

The affair was not only curious, but taking on an air of mystery.

"Well," asked Mr. Marsters, "can't you tell me something about the matter?"

"I do not know—only that she is good, in trouble, and I pity her. I don't know mooch. It is about a treatay—a treatay with Russia."

Mr. Marsters thought it was even becoming international. The Italian continued:

"She pull her hands, and say-a, when they make that treatay they make-a her go-a back to Russia."

Mr. Marsters leaned back in his chair, closed his eyes, and thought it all over, and ended by yielding.



“Well,” he finally said, “it is somewhat irregular, but I’ll go to see her this afternoon.”

The Italian was delighted, overwhelming the lawyer with thanks in the name of the countess. He enthusiastically dictated the address of the lady, which Mr. Marsters carefully wrote in his memorandum book.

“Does the lady speak English?” asked the lawyer, thinking, perhaps, that he might be compelled to provide an interpreter.

Pietro informed him that she spoke the English language with facility, and, the conference being at an end, the Italian took his leave, but at the door was detained by a question:

“Do you know,” asked Mr. Marsters, as he looked at his entry in the book, “from what part of Russia the Countess Mura Naletoff comes?”

“Madame has her place in Woronetz, where she has great estates.”

The Italian waited for other questions, but, receiving none, bowed profoundly and passed through the door.

Though Mr. Marsters had yielded to impulses far more characteristic of Mr. Harlowe than himself, it was not without saving clauses, and one was involved in the last question he had asked of Pietro.

What it was was soon made apparent, for, tak-



ing his hat, he went straight to the office of the Russian consul.

Gaining access to that dignitary, he told him that he was in search of information. First satisfying the consul as to who he was, and his importance, he said, and most guardedly:

“In a matter in which I am concerned, a statement has been made to me as to the truth of which I am not clear. But by answering a simple question, if you can and will, perhaps I can determine the truth.”

“I will try willingly,” responded the consul courteously.

“Is there a lady in Russia, of high rank and distinction, living in Woronetz, named Countess Mura Naletoff?”

The expression of the consul changed instantly from that of bland courtesy to surprise and intense interest. In fact, the manner of the Russian official was such as to deepen the curiosity of Mr. Marsters and put him on guard at every point. His question was answered by the look the consul bent upon him so keenly, and the expressions, unreadable by him though they were, which chased over the Russian's face, and as well by the excitement of manner an effort to control which was plainly made.

“May I ask what interest you have in the lady?” asked the consul.



"None whatever," replied Mr. Marsters, feeling that he could safely and truthfully say that, whatever other answer he might have to make to a similar question a few hours later.

"May I ask also whether you are acquainted with the lady?"

"Why, sir, I have never been in Russia," replied Mr. Marsters.

"That does not answer my question," said the consul sternly.

The manner of the consul was such as to satisfy Marsters, not only that the countess was a veritable person, but one of consequence; she might be accused of crime, indeed even a criminal, but nothing was plainer than that the consul regarded the lady as of consequence. Though seeking information, Mr. Marsters had no notion of being catechised, and until he saw further into the affair, he would yield up nothing, however slight. Besides, he was annoyed by the tone of the Russian official.

"Pardon me!" he said. "A person asking a question should not refuse to answer one. But, there is this difference between the one that you put to me and the one I asked of you. I asked it of your courtesy; you demand yours as a right. However, I have nothing to conceal. I do not know the lady. I never have seen her, nor, until within the hour have I heard her name."



"There is such a lady," said the consul, "and she is in America."

His expression changed suddenly.

"Ah!" he cried suddenly. "Pardon me, sir! I did not comprehend in my surprise. Sir, I commend your prudence. Ah! the selection is wisely made."

Mr. Marsters, though further puzzled by this extraordinary change, ended the interview and went immediately to call upon the countess.



## CHAPTER IV.

### EDGEMERE.

THE name given by Mr. Harlowe to the home he had builded on the shores of Long Island Sound was Edgemere, not, as many supposed, because it was on the edge of the water, but because it was on a ridge which marked the boundaries of sea and land; and, an ideal summer house it was.

Perched on this bluff overlooking a vast expanse of water, the house was especially distinguished for its wealth of verandas, which afforded comfortable and sheltered nooks, no matter from which point in the heavens the sun shone or the winds blew, without loss of a water view. The bluff at its edge was surmounted, and life and limb protected, by a substantial stone parapet, on the broad coping of which were placed, at regular intervals, large iron vases filled with flowers and vines—an old-fashioned device of ornamentation, which added stateliness, without destroying the graceful charm of the whole. On that side of the house which gave itself to the sea the ground was laid in carefully kept turf. Trees there were none,



but strong-growing shrubbery, protecting the garden table and the chairs nestling under it, the broad verandas, and a rustic shelter on that side of the lawn opposite to the house and near the stone wall, gave the needed shade.

If, at the risk of falling, you leaned far enough over the parapet, you could see at the foot of the bluff a little sandy beach where there was a row of bath houses, four or five in number; and, moored to a float, anchored a short distance from the shore, a flotilla of row and sail boats, together with a steam yacht of moderate dimensions. This beach was reached by a circuitous path, leading down from the right of the plateau on which was the house, to a point where the declivity ended in a low, but abrupt precipice, and was from thence helped out by a rude wooden stairway.

On that side of the house which was not on the sea, and which might possibly have been called the front, the grounds stretched down to the public highway, a quarter of a mile distant, in wide, rolling lawn, diversified by paths, drives, trees, coleus and geraniums in masses and ribbons, and salvia in bonfires.

Here Mr. Harlowe, a bachelor, dwelt in the idle summer days with his small family, consisting of his maiden sister Melinda, who was the mistress of his household, and his niece, Flossie Dale, a winsome creature, the trial of her aunt and the



pet of her uncle. For neighbors they had upon their left John Marsters, the partner of Mr. Harlowe in the practice of the law, and on the right a Mrs. Melchor, an intimate friend of Melinda Harlowe, a widow lady of large wealth, living in considerable state with her only child, a son named Arthur, upon whom she lavished a doting affection, clothing him with attributes of intellect he did not possess, utterly blind to the imperfections he so clearly advertised by his presence.

Between them these three families owned a mile and a half of the shore line, and had entered into a compact to dispose of none of it, so as to prevent the obtrusion of undesirable neighbors or obstructions of the magnificent water view, wide-spreading in front of them.

Happy in innocent pursuits these people had dwelt for some summers, peacefully and contentedly, until one day, in this summer of 1893, they were all of them suddenly involved in loves and ambitions which had their birth in lands many thousand miles to the east.

With whatever degree of confidence our light-some friend Dale may have informed the Prince Kroupiève of his intention to visit his brother-in-law, it was with a total loss of it that he approached Edgemere. Indeed, in his self-communing, he confessed that were it not for the important mission confided to him by the Prince



Kroupiève, he could not have found courage to present himself in person until he had first prepared the way by correspondence, and then only if the nature of the correspondence warranted it.

Confident of a warm welcome from his daughter Flossie, with whom always he had been more of a playmate than a parent, and of a kindly, if not enthusiastic, reception from his brother-in-law—were the latter uninfluenced—it was Melinda, the sister of his dead wife, who was the cause of his timidity. He knew that the plain-spoken woman regarded him with disfavor, if not positive aversion, and was never backward in the statement of her principles and opinions. Besides there were battles royal in the past, memories of which he recalled to his disquiet.

While it was true that he could only say to his brother-in-law that Prince Kroupiève desired to retain the firm of Harlowe & Marsters, and could not even suggest the nature of the business to be engaged upon, still he felt that it was important, and that he could say so, because of the great importance of the prince. And the errand placed him in the light of one who was bearing gifts rather than supplicating them.

But for all that he was by no means certain of the nature of his reception, and he had bragged not a little of his intimacy with the distinguished advocate. It was this that made the companion-



ship that Rodion Michaelovitch insisted upon, and which Dale was convinced was commanded by the prince, embarrassing. If his reception was to be a cold one, he did not want Rodion to be a witness of it. Hence it was by the exercise of no little ingenuity that he separated himself from the spy by "cutting across lots," as he called it, sending his companion by the longer and easier way of the public highway.

As he approached he saw the flutter of skirts on the veranda, and therefore cautiously made his way through the shrubbery. They were, as a matter of fact, those of Flossie. But Dale did not know that.

"If those skirts," he muttered, "were the stern draperies of Melinda, I'm fortunate in escaping her for a first encounter."

Shielded by a clump of shrubbery, he peered up and down; commenting audibly upon the improvements made during his absence. Finding no one visible he came out into the open, brushing the dust from his boots, expressing his thoughts aloud—a bad habit he was given to.

"I thought I knew the way across lots," he said. "Perhaps I should have done better to have kept with my curious and observant friend Rodion Michaelovitch, for, in losing my way, I have lost time, and he will reach here as quickly. Rodion, humph! I presume my accomplished friend



Prince Kroupiève keeps Michaelovitch at my heels to insure the performance of the contract."

Flickering his handkerchief in the air before returning it to his pocket, he continued:

"What matter! since I already know that Michaelovitch is an agent of the Imperial Police of Russia. Rule for success as a Russian diplomat: Possess an elegant manner and command a swarm of spies."

Dismissing the subject of his thoughts by a careless wave of the hand, he devoted his attention to the house and its surroundings.

"This is a lovely home for Flossie," he remarked, looking about him. "I wonder if the little girl is still single. Of course; she is too young to be anything else. But then her mother was no older when she was married."

This consideration presented a problem which he at once proceeded to solve in a characteristically whimsical way.

"I'll toss a coin," he said. "Heads married; tails single."

Taking a coin from his pocket, he spun it into the air, catching it dexterously as it fell.

"Tails! Single! Good!"

He pocketed the coin and dismissed the question as if truly and conclusively answered.

And in this characteristic act was to be found



one of the reasons why the practical-minded Melinda regarded him with such disfavor.

Anxious to pass his reception unobserved by Michaelovitch and momentarily expecting the arrival of that wily person, one would have supposed that he would have boldly made the plunge by applying for admission at the door. But his timid fears held him back; at length the opening of the door caused him to step behind a bush until he could determine who the comer was.

It was a lad, staggering under the weight of a wooden cabinet, apparently too large and too heavy for so small a person. But the boy struggled manfully down the steps and across the lawn to a table on the right, on which with some difficulty he placed it. It was the office boy who had been so attracted by the gold earrings of Pietro.

Dale, watching him from his place of concealment, said:

“That looks like my shrewd but diminutive friend Joe.”

Then he came forward, addressing the lad:

“Joe!”

The lad, startled by the address, in his surprise nearly toppled over the cabinet, thereby sustaining another shock.

“Wha’ t’ell,” he exclaimed angrily.

But his tone instantly changed to one of glad-



ness, and a broad grin spread over his face, when he saw who had addressed him.

"By chiminy!" he cried. "It's Misser Dale! Say! I'm tickled near t' det t' see youse, Misser Dale."

They shook hands gravely.

Then Dale, lounging easily and gracefully on the arm of a garden chair, opened up the conversation which bore him such results.

"Just arrived, Joe," he said in his airy manner. "Item of fashionable intelligence! James Dale, Esq., of Midair Hall, County of Nowhere, has just returned from Russia on a high mission of state. But what is this wooden structure?"

He tapped the cabinet with his cane.

"Dat's Misser Harlowe's scine-tiffic discovery," replied Joe promptly and briefly.

"That is?"

Curiously observing the cabinet, and perceiving that from its appearance it was not new, Dale asked:

"You mean antique discovery, don't you, Joe?"

The lad shook his head as one who knew what he meant and was not to be diverted by senseless questions adding by way of further explanation:

"He's goin' to study out here in the air."

Dale went to the cabinet, opened it, and, peer-



ing in, found it was filled with vials and bottles containing liquids of various colors.

"The contents are somewhat indicative of the sciences," he remarked, and then turning to Joe said gravely and severely:

"On your word of honor, Joe, isn't this Aunt Melinda's medicine case?"

"Nope," firmly responded Joe.

Moved by a strong impulse of friendship toward his interlocutor, the lad said in a tone of earnest warning:

"Say! don't you let Misser Harlowe jab you in de arm wid dose needles he's got in dere. He jollied me into it, an' I had de wuss sore on me arm—he squared it, dough, wid plunks."

Dale eyed the boy with interest and curiosity. A new word had evidently been added to the vocabulary of slang during his absence from the country.

"Plunks, me boy?" he repeated inquiringly.

With no little impatience over this manifestation of ignorance of the peculiar language in use in the best circles on the east side, Joe exclaimed:

"Dollars! Money!"

Dale stood rebuked.

"Oh, I perceive," he said apologetically, turning again to an inspection of the cabinet. Failing, however, to obtain even an inkling of the uses to which the cabinet or its contents were put, he



closed it with the remark that he supposed it was a new fad of Chester's.

"Joe, how is it I find you here?" he asked of the boy, as he leaned against the table with his arm resting on the box.

"Oh, I chased meself up from N' York las' night wid some books and papers. I'm stopping over dere t' Misser Marsters' house."

Joe perched himself on the arm of a garden chair, with dangling feet, sustaining himself with one hand on the end of the arm and the other on the back of the chair.

"Marsters!" exclaimed Dale, with a start of surprise. "Has he a house here, too?"

"Yep; over dere," pointing to the left at the imminent risk of falling. "Built it las' winter."

"Surely, Joe, you don't mean—oh, wild and yearning hope! Has he married Melinda at last?"

"Nope!" replied Joe, partially successful in balancing himself on his precarious perch without the aid of his hands. "Aint married; sister keepin' house for him, same like Mr. Harlowe's."

"Of course," commented Dale; "too good to be true. Has the firm of Harlowe & Marsters transferred its business to Edgemere?"

The question was an idle one, having no purpose, but in the answer there was a shock of surprise,



“Dey aint no firm now. Harlowe’s pulled out—dat is, he’s goin’ to t’day w’en dey signs de mootule release, wot Tom Bentley’s drawin’ up now. Harlowe’s retired. See!”

“Retired?” muttered Dale to himself. “Ah! That will disarrange Kroupiève’s plans somewhat.”

Dale was so absorbed in the thought as to how this astonishing news would affect himself that Joe felt the necessity of bringing Dale to a consciousness of his existence.

“Say, Misser Dale! a woman come up las’ night to Misser Marsters’ house, wid a name that ud crack a rock—Rollemoff—or someting like dat.”

“The ‘off’ has a Russian flavor,” laughed Dale quietly. “Suppose it should be the woman the prince is so anxious to find—the Countess Mura Naletoff.”

“Dat’s right,” sententiously remarked Joe.

“What’s right?”

“De furrin woman’s name.”

Dale sprang to his feet in a fever of excitement.

“Joe, are you sure?”

“De same. Dat’s her.”

Dale moved toward the house rapidly, much excited, but, checking himself, turned and walked as rapidly back to Joe, standing over him. He began a question, but checked his impulse, silent a moment. Finally he indulged his habit and expressed his thoughts aloud;



“The prince would, without doubt, consider the finding of the Countess Naletoff a real—a very great service. Shall I drop everything here and go with the news to the prince, or shall I send it through Michaelovitch, with the chance that he will take all the credit of the discovery to himself.”

Becoming suddenly conscious that Joe was regarding him with curious interest, Dale pulled himself together in an effort to get rid of the lad.

“Joe,” he said, “you are a mine of information. Now do me a favor. I expect a friend——”

He was interrupted by the appearance of Rodion Michaelovitch, who entered by the path by which he had come.

“Never mind, for here he is now,” said Dale, and, advancing toward Rodion, exclaimed warmly:

“Ah! My friend Rodion Michaelovitch!”

“Ah!” replied the newcomer, just as warmly. “I did see you from the carriageway, some distance off, and did hasten hither.”

“Has the prince come?” asked Dale eagerly.

“Precisely! He did arrive by a route different from the one we did take. He is even now disposed at his ’otel.”

Joe, little concerned in the conversation, but much interested in the foreigner, slipped down



from his uncomfortable seat and threw himself on the grass where he could, at nearer range, and more at his convenience, study the stranger. In doing so he accomplished what he had no purpose in doing; he took himself out of the sight and notice of the two.

“Go to him at once,” eagerly urged Dale, moved by two purposes—one, a real desire to forward the business of the prince; the other, to get Michaelovitch away as quickly as possible.

“And for what reason?” asked the always suspicious Rodion.

“My brother-in-law,” replied Dale, “is about to give up the practice of the law; he is to sign the papers of the dissolution of his firm to-day. The prince must see him, or Mr. Marsters, which would be much better, before that is done. This afternoon, even, may be too late. Go—urge him to call at once. I will do all I can to prevent this signing until after, at least, the prince has seen one or the other.”

This Dale neither expected nor intended to do, but it served as a good reason why he should remain, and had the appearance of influence and importance.

Whether Rodion was deceived or not did not appear, but the wily spy knowing well, and much better than Dale, the importance his master attached to the securing of Harlowe as counsel,



immediately moved off to depart, with the remark:

“Ha! I will go at once!”

But Dale detained him.

“Ah, Rodion!” he said rather hesitatingly, “the prince is—ah—much interested in a lady—ah—the Countess Naletoff, isn’t he?”

Rodion turned sharply on Dale, eying him suspiciously a brief instant—so briefly, indeed, as to be hardly noticeable—and replied gayly:

“Ah, my friend Dale! ze countess is a compatriot of his rank. She is in America, an ze prince would find her zat he may pay his devoirs.”

As a rule Michaelovitch spoke the English language with singular precision and accuracy. It was only in moments of agitation or excitement that the “th” over which he usually triumphed was too much for him. Dale knew this.

“But,” persisted Dale, “he is particularly anxious to find this particular compatriot.”

“Ah, Dale!” laughed Rodion, “know you not our master yet? The prince is a gallant. Ze whole womankind does interest ze prince. To keep a record of his amours—it is hopeless.”

Dale knew that Michaelovitch was trying to mislead him and was much annoyed.

“Hum!” he said. “That’s all, is it? Well, if that is the case, then there is no urgency in my information.”



Rodion was interested. He strove hard to appear indifferent as he asked the question:

“You know something of her?”

“I know where she is,” replied Dale coolly.

Rodion was intensely interested.

“She is here—at a neighbor’s house—now.”

This information, coming so unexpectedly, and on the eve of extensive preparations for the tracing of the lady, overturned Michaelovitch’s composure.

“The Countess Naletoff!” he exclaimed; “impossible!”

Going eagerly to Dale he caught him by the lapel of the coat, pleading insinuatingly.

“Tell me what you know?”

Dale had, in the beginning, intended to tell Michaelovitch all he had learned and how, but, annoyed by the spy’s contemptuous effort at misleading him, who not even tried to conceal the purpose of his words, he now yielded to the caprice of withholding further information. So, gently disengaging himself from Rodion’s almost frenzied clutch, he stepped back a few steps and replied tauntingly:

“Devoirs, hey! Well, Rodion, if you reflect your master’s anxiety to pay his devoirs, it must be great. The countess is here, but you will best serve your master by going to him at once and urging him to come without delay.”



Rodion, too experienced in intrigue and diplomacy not to realize that he had made a mistake in his contemptuous rejection of Dale's tender for confidence, and that the eagerness into which he had been betrayed in his effort to obtain the secret his master so much desired had given Dale an increased idea of the value of his information, abandoned further effort. Believing that Dale withheld the exact and full information in the hope of a large reward, he hurried off; determined that the news of the discovery of the countess, if not her exact whereabouts, should be first communicated to the prince by himself.

"I go wit speed," he said, and disappeared.

Dale watched him go with a laugh.

"Devoirs, indeed!" he said aloud. "I do not believe that the prince keeps spies in his employ to find 'compatriotic' ladies to whom he may pay his devoirs, all the same. One thing is certain. The prince is very anxious to find the countess. Why? That I don't know, and will not learn when I take him the information. I fear that the accomplished prince does not repose full confidence in his friend, James Dale, Esq."

"Say!" exclaimed Joe, rising from the grass. "Youse can't retain Harlowe for no new case."

Dale had forgotten the very existence of the boy, and he started at the sound, muttering:



"That lad is all ears and understanding."

He took a bill from his pocket, and, extending it to Joe, said:

"Here is a plunk or two. Oblige me by not saying anything of what you've heard here."

Joe took the bill with a knowing wink and went his way, saying:

"Marsters must be shoutin' fur me by dis time. So-long, Misser Dale."

"By-by, Joe," responded Dale absently. "Hum! hum! hum!" he went on when alone. "The situation is interesting. Matters are whirling about me that I touch without understanding. Chester is giving up the law. Why? Can he have received that foreign appointment which he expected when his friend Williams was made Secretary of State? And the prince and the countess? Kroupiève has a purpose back of this treaty with Russia. Is the countess concerned in that? And who is she? And how is it that a Russian lady of noble rank is the guest of John Marsters, member of the firm of Harlowe & Marsters, whom the prince wants as his lawyers, and yet does not know the relations of the countess and that firm? And I am in the employ of the prince, and brother-in-law to the firm. It's a muddle of large dimensions. How do I know that I am not running counter to the interests of those whose interests



it is not my interest to run counter to? I shouldn't wonder if I've become involved in one of those Russian intrigues which usually wind up in destroying everybody concerned."

He walked off to the house, bolder by reason of the confusion in which he found himself.



## CHAPTER V.

### THE FATTED CALF.

As Dale reached the foot of the short flight of steps that led to the veranda, the door of the house was suddenly flung open and Flossie appeared.

Though startled at first, in an instant she recognized her father, and, with a scream of delight, she flew over the veranda, clearing the steps at a bound, and landed in her father's arms, crying, "Dad! dad! dad!"

"Flossie!" he cried in return, and after embracing her again and again, he held her off that he might look at her, but, finding that his eyes were growing moist, he embraced her again until he could regain self-command. Then he held her off, eying her critically and admiringly.

"Why! why! why!" he exclaimed, "what a charming creature! A young lady! Positively! Dem it! Miss Dale, your most devoted."

He bowed with exaggerated deference.

"There, there, dad!" said Flossie, embarrassed by her father's openly expressed and sincere admiration, and placing her little white hand over his mouth, where it rivaled the whiteness of his



mustache. "Don't burst into tears over my growth in three years; I couldn't help it. Come and sit down. Don't let us go into the house yet. It is much nicer out here in the air. Come and sit down and tell me where you've been and what you've done."

Thus, chattering like a magpie, she drew him across the lawn to the settee.

It was plain to be seen that the family regarded the lawn on the seaward front as part of the house, even to the extent of receiving guests there.

Having placed her father in his seat, Flossie climbed on his knee, as she had always been accustomed to do, and quite as if it were a few hours since they were parted.

"Do you know," she went on, "that it was only to-day that I wrote you a letter—a real pretty letter—in which I asked you to come home, for I was longing to see you. I haven't even mailed it, and here you are."

She took his mustache by the ends, pulled it back, and kissed him.

"You came home sooner than you meant to, didn't you? When did you get back?"

This was an awkward question for Dale. He did not want to admit that he had been back three weeks without even announcing his arrival. By an adroit turn he apparently answered the question without doing so.



"Flossie," he said, "regard your parent with respect. He is in this country on a special mission of state."

Flossie looked up with violet eyes dancing with merriment, and burst into a ringing laugh.

Dale looked down in surprise, assuming an air of offended dignity.

"You are mirthful, my daughter!"

"A mission?" laughed Flossie, hardly able to articulate by reason of laughter. "You? It's preposterous! You a missionary?"

"A whatawary!" exclaimed Dale, genuinely astounded. "A high mission of state is what I said—likewise solemn and lucrative."

He took a large roll of bills from his pocket, displaying it to Flossie.

"See! the results. And I've brought you lots of pretty things from France, Egypt, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Russia."

"Oh, dad!"

She flung her arms around his neck, saying: "Where are they? Let's get them."

When Dale, in danger of being strangled by her enthusiasm, could release himself, he replied:

"Wait! wait! They are in my trunks, Miss Impatience."

Then he asked, sincerely and earnestly:

"Do you think Aunt Melinda will let me in?"

Florence replied with a doubtful shrug of her



shoulders and a lifting of the eyebrows, as if to say nothing could be predicated of her aunt.

Somewhat cast down, Dale asked another question:

“How is the dear old girl, anyway?”

“Oh,” answered his daughter, in a hopeless tone, “she’s well,” adding, as if it were one of the crosses she must bear patiently: “She always is.”

“And,” persisted Dale timorously, lowering his voice, “as always, is she just a little—ahem!—rigid, so to speak?”

Flossie nodded her head in the same hopeless way.

“And Uncle Chester?”

The girl’s face brightened.

“As always—good and loving,” she answered promptly. “But you don’t tell me about yourself—your travels.”

“There isn’t much to tell—that is, all at once and on demand,” said Dale. “When that wandering fit came on three years ago——”

“Uncle said you had some money,” the girl interrupted as she settled herself to be entertained, “and burned to spend it.”

“Truth is a virtue, undoubtedly,” replied her father, “but, like most virtues, unpleasant when in operation. Well,” he continued, “I went straight to France, where I fell in with some jolly



Americans, and went as far as Cairo with them. *They* went up the Nile; *I* didn't."

Flossie looked up inquiringly.

"My money had given out."

"Oh! what did you do?" This sympathetically.

"Resorted to my heels."

"Ran away?"

"No; I danced and sang at the Café Chantant in Cairo."

"Lovely!"

"Yes; I translated my latest songs into French. I'll sing them to you when I can, where Aunt Melinda can't hear me."

Flossie laughed.

"When Aunt Melinda hears anything in French she thinks it's wicked," she said. "But did you make any money?"

"More than I hoped."

"Delightful! That's what you did in London once."

"Yes; my heels and voice are my bank of last resort when I'm traveling."

"Did anyone find you out?"

"Oh, no! Wigs, grease-paint, and poverty were a sufficient disguise. So, saltatorial industry having replenished my purse, I wandered to Constantinople, where I fell in with Prince Kroupiève, a Russian nobleman, and with him I went to



Russia, and through him I'm back again in this country with a pocket full of money. And there you are."

"Charming!" exclaimed Flossie, again flinging her arms about her father's neck and kissing him. "Uncle Chester will be glad, too."

"Will he?" asked Dale eagerly, highly pleased.

"Yes, indeed! He likes you, though he does say you lack purpose in life."

Dale pulled a wry face, not liking the criticism, but he rallied:

"I lack purpose? How mistaken he is! I have one purpose I pursue steadily, and that is to get all the pleasure there is in life out of it."

He took Flossie's hands in his own, looking into her eyes:

"But now about you? Heart-whole yet?"

Flossie hung her head, nodding affirmatively, but with a doubtful air.

"Not quite, eh?" pursued her father. "Prince Charming has come?"

"Oh," replied Flossie scornfully, "Aunt Melinda has settled it for me. There's a Miss Sissy around here, and she has chosen him."

"And Miss Flossie has not?"

Flossie looked away, but her father was persistent.

"Then there *is* someone?"

"Well," said the honest Flossie reluctantly,



not as if she were withholding confidence, but rather as if she were in doubt, "well, there is Tom—but——"

"Tom who?" asked Dale, greatly interested.

"Bentley. He's one of uncle's students."

"Is he nice?"

"Real nice and very handsome, but—oh, bother! Let's find the family."

Flossie rose, and, taking her father's hand, pulled him unresistingly to his feet.

"You must be on your best behavior, dad, with Aunt Melinda. You know she's so queer."

Before Dale could reply a middle-aged gentleman bustled in, followed by Joe.

"Where's Harlowe?" he asked, and, his eyes falling on Dale, he answered himself: "Oh, there he is! No, it isn't, either."

He bustled up nearer to discover who it was, for evidently the figure was familiar.

"Why, it's Dale!" he exclaimed, surprise and pleasure in his tone, while his face brightened with a smile. "Hello, Dale! Where did you turn up from so unexpectedly? How are you?"

He took Dale's hand, shaking it warmly and cordially.

"I'm well, old man," replied Dale, much pleased by the manner of his greeting. "So are you, by your looks."

As they stopped to shake hands Flossie went



toward the house, where she was joined by Tom Bentley, who had entered after the others.

"Never better," replied Marsters. "When did you get home? Just got here, I suppose."

Without waiting for a reply, Marsters asked Bentley if the papers were all there, and without waiting for an answer to that question went to the table, with the remark:

"I'll wager Harlowe hasn't even looked at them yet. Here's his cashbook."

He opened it and looked over its pages.

"Wonderful!" he exclaimed. "Dale, here's something truly remarkable."

Dale joined him at the table.

"Harlowe's cashbook balances. It actually agrees with mine. Hang it! I thought his cashbook would give me an excuse to delay things for several days."

"Who is the old duffer?" asked Tom of Flossie, pointing to Dale.

It was a most unfortunate question, for Flossie, in great resentment, drew herself up with all the dignity she could command, and informed Tom:

"The old duffer, Mr. Bentley, is my father."

With her head high in the air she walked away from him, with as much stateliness as she could assume.

"Lord!" cried Tom, "what a break I've made."



And Joe was so delighted with Bentley's blunder that he turned somersaults and cartwheels innumerable.

"Seen Harlowe yet?" asked Mr. Marsters of Dale.

"Not yet."

"Come, dad," pleaded Flossie, taking the hand of her father, "we'll find Uncle Chester and Aunt Melinda."

"One moment, Flossie," said Dale, detaining her by the hand; and, turning to Mr. Marsters, said: "You will have a caller this morning, Marsters—the Prince Kroupiève."

Mr. Marsters stood upright in his surprise.

"Prince Kroupiève? Here?"

"Do you know him?" asked Dale, surprised in his turn.

"No," guardedly replied Marsters. "I have never met the Prince Kroupiève."

Dale looked keenly at Marsters, evidently striving to gather some intelligence as to the "muddle," as he called it, for he had thought it strange that Michaelovitch should manifest so much surprise over the presence of the Countess Naletoff in that neighborhood, and now here was Marsters, whose guest the countess was, evincing equal surprise over the presence of the prince.

He did not express his thoughts, but merely said:



"A fine fellow! Treat him well, will you? His call will be on business—business which I am sure you will regard as highly important. I was sent here to pave the way for his call. You'll see him, won't you?"

"Oh, yes!" replied Mr. Marsters with a quiet, shrewd smile. "I'll see him."

"He's a most important figure in his own country," continued Dale, "a nobleman of the highest rank and great power—an intimate friend of the Czar."

He turned to Flossie without waiting for further remarks from Marsters, and said:

"Now, Flossie, we'll go."

Together they fairly skipped off into the house.

"Comical dog, that Dale!" commented Mr. Marsters as his eyes followed them into the house.

"An irreclaimable Bohemian! But you can't help liking him. And there's no wrong in him."

He went back to the table, pulling at the lobe of his left ear, a favorite trick when thinking.

"Hum! The Prince Kroupiève! Now, where did he run across that Russian? I believe if the Emperor of China were to visit us, Dale would turn up as his most intimate friend."

Dismissing his thoughts with a gesture implying perplexity, he turned his attention to the business which had brought him to Edgemere.

"Where's the release?" he asked of Bentley,



who handed it to him. "Now, Bentley," he continued, "you bring the countess here, but take care that Harlowe does not see her until I tell you."

"I'll be careful, sir," replied Tom, going toward the path.

Mr. Marsters took from his pocket his spectacles, and placed them on his nose.

"Pshaw!" he exclaimed, as he took them off impatiently, "my long-sighted glasses! Joe, I left my reading glasses on the table in the library at home. Run and get them, or I'll do no business to-day."

Joe moved off, saying in a low tone: "Well, that wouldn't hurt me if you didn't." And, raising his voice, he called loudly after Tom.

By this time Mr. Marsters' attention had been attracted to the cabinet.

"What is this lumbering up the table?" he asked aloud, opening the cabinet and looking in. "Bottles, vials—filled and unfilled; syringes, sponges—what does Harlowe do with all this truck? And his desk at the office is littered with bottles like these."

Closing the cabinet, he went to a chair and sat down to await the return of Joe.

"I wonder," he said, after a little thought, "if I can persuade Harlowe to take one more case. It certainly is worthy his best efforts."



He was silent for a moment or two.

"It is singular," he said aloud, "that Prince Kroupiève should make his appearance on this day of all days, for he cannot know that the Countess Naletoff is here."

Quite right, Mr. Marsters, for, if the prince had known, his feet would have been turned in the direction of your house, and not in the direction of Edgemere, as they were at that moment.



## CHAPTER VI.

### RODION'S SURPRISING NEWS.

WHETHER it was from a desire to conceal his movements, an effort to escape from his own importance and celebrity, or that he thought it did not comport with the dignity of a prince of a great empire to seek rather than be sought, the fact is that Prince Kroupiève registered himself at the modest little hotel in the modest little village of Northport as Mr. Alexis.

But whatever he was striving to conceal, one thing was made plain to those closely attached to him, and that was that he had placed a very high value upon the relations he sought to establish with the firm of Harlowe & Marsters, or specifically, with Mr. Harlowe.

It was to this hotel, where the prince was waiting the result of the visit of Dale and Michaelovitch to Edgemere, that the latter hastened on leaving the former.

The spy burst in upon the prince in no little excitement, to that dignitary's astonishment, for he was accustomed to a more orderly approach from those who served him.



“Master!” exclaimed Rodion, breathless from haste, “the Countess Naletoff——”

The prince sprang to his feet so suddenly as to bring Michaelovitch to a full stop.

“Yes! yes! yes!” he cried eagerly and impatiently.

“—is found.”

“Ah!”

The interjection was one of incredulity. It seemed to the prince that Northport was the last place in which to learn the whereabouts of the countess.

“Where?” he asked sharply.

“Here.”

“You have found the countess here? You have seen her?”

“No, Your Excellency, but the countess is here.”

The prince laughed scornfully.

“My poor Rodion, you have become bewildered.”

“No, your excellency; it was the Dale who discovered her.”

“Dale?” in great scorn. “Why, he knows her not.”

“True, master! But the Dale is not ignorant that such a person as the Countess Mura Naletoff does live——”

“Ah!”



“—for he did ask me if the prince was not much interested in the lady——”

“ Ah! ”

“—and much desired to find her.”

“ Ah! How learned he that? Your reply was what? ” quickly queried the prince sternly.

“ That the countess was a compatriot of the prince's rank, to whom he would pay his devoirs.”

The prince nodded approvingly, and said:

“ That was well done, Rodion. And then? ”

“ He told me that the lady was here—at a neighbor's house—in this place.”

“ Very singular, truly! ” was the prince's comment; and again he asked sharply: “ Well then, at what house? Where? ”

“ That he would not tell me.”

“ He—the man in my pay—would not tell. He would conceal the news from me? ”

The prince was undeniably angry, and Michaelovitch seized the opportunity to deliver a stab in the back to Dale, while apparently defending him.

“ Be not angry, master! The Dale but waits to tell you. He did me the honor to disbelieve my explanations of Your Excellency's desire to find the countess, and does put a high value on his discovery. So, he reserves the full information for your own ears, in the hope of the reward to follow.”



The prince caught the note of bitterness in the voice of his spy, and replied with grim humor:

“And which will not be divided with you. Thus the honest man is often robbed of his just dues. And in the meantime she may escape us.”

“I think not, Your Excellency,” quietly remarked the spy, steeling himself against the sarcasm of the prince’s words.

After pacing up and down the small apartment the prince said:

“I will wrest it all from the Dale when he comes, and that you must see is soon. And the lawyer, Harlowe? What of him?”

“Here also the Dale is useful,” said Rodion, adding after a brief pause, “and urgent.”

The prince looked up inquiringly.

“The Dale has learned that Mr. Harlowe is about to retire from the law, bringing the matter to the end by signing papers to-day.”

“Ah!”

“The Dale, therefore, is urgent that you call without delay—before the signing is done.”

“Ah!”

“He does urge you go this morning, for he fears this afternoon may be too late.”

“I will go at once.”

“And he thinks you will do better to see Mr. Marsters first.”

“Wherefore?”



Rodion shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"It is the Harlowe who would retire. The Marsters does not want it. The Dale thinks the Marsters more open to appeal."

The prince drew himself up haughtily.

"It is the Prince Kroupiève who makes the offer in the name of Russia. Mr. Harlowe will not decline so great an honor. Get me a carriage. I will go to Mr. Harlowe."

As Michaelovitch left the room the prince seated himself. He was perplexed over the discovery of the countess in that out-of-the-way place. Were it possible that she could have knowledge of his business with Mr. Harlowe, he might suppose that she was there in a counter effort. But she could not, for he had made a confidant of no one. Dale merely knew that he, the prince, desired to retain his brother-in-law; but as to the nature of the business nothing. As to Michaelovitch, such confidence as had been bestowed on him was only given at a time when it was impossible for him to communicate it. But it certainly was a singular coincidence. His meditations were interrupted by Michaelovitch's announcement of the carriage to convey him to Edgemere.

The spy accompanied the prince to the carriage, and was instructed to begin a search for the countess without delay, independently of the information to be obtained from Dale.



Returning to the veranda of the hotel, after the departure of the prince, he lit a fresh cigar and sat down to think how he could conduct the search to which he was commanded. Indeed, he sat so long in the enjoyment of his cigar and succeeding ones that he saw the prince return from Edgemere and go to his room before he had formulated a plan.

The return of the prince reminded him that his instructions were urgent, and he was about to set out blindly, when he saw, turning the corner above him, a light buckboard wagon, on which were seated a young girl and an elderly man.

The man was Dale. He threw away his cigar and hurried in pursuit.



## CHAPTER VII.

### THE OFFER OF RUSSIA.

WHEN the prince had been driven upon the grounds of Edgemere, his driver, instead of going to the main entrance of the house, and evidently familiar with the habits and customs of the family, drew up at a path running beside the house. In his desire to be helpful he advised the prince to go to the seaward front of the house.

Thus it was that he found Mr. Marsters engrossed in thought, at ease upon a garden chair.

It was not, indeed, until the prince spoke that Mr. Marsters became aware of his presence.

"Pardon!" said the prince, lifting his hat with that grand air which was his most attractive possession. "Pardon! Do I address the distinguished Mr. Harlowe?"

Mr. Marsters rose, and advanced politely, replying courteously:

"No, sir; but Mr. Harlowe is at home. Won't you walk in?"

"Perhaps, sir," said the prince, as he took from his pocket his cardcase, "I have the honor to address Mr. Marsters?"



Mr. Marsters bowed in deference to the respectful tone of the mention of his name, and admitted he was the person.

“Permit me, sir, to introduce myself,” and the prince extended his card to Mr. Marsters, who, taking it, glanced at it with a quickly repressed start.

“Prince Kroupiève!” he muttered in surprise, for the prince’s manner and appearance did not accord with his preconceptions of the man. He politely motioned the prince to a seat, who attributed the surprise of Mr. Marsters to a recognition of his own celebrity.

“If you will grant me the honor of an interview,” the prince said, as he crossed the lawn to the chair indicated, “it will, I imagine, serve every purpose of my call; and I will be so brief as the importance of my mission permits.”

He seated himself with great dignity the while Mr. Marsters was thinking what that mission could be, so deeply indeed, that the prince was forced to speak again.

“Have I your permission to proceed?” he asked, as if he were the humblest of persons.

Mr. Marsters emerged from his speculations with a hasty, “At your pleasure, prince,” and bringing a chair into near relations with the visitor, sat down.

“You, sir, are of course aware,” the prince



began with a bow, "that articles of extradition treaty are now pending between this great country and the Empire of Russia. My august master, the Emperor" (and the prince lifted his hat, to Mr. Marsters' surprise, for, looking around, he saw no one else on the ground) "sublimely anxious, believes that such a treaty will make firm and enduring that friendship which exists between our two great governments, and which has existed since the days of your Civil War, at which time it was possible for the revered father of my master to render a service to the government of the immortal Lincoln."

The prince uncovered again, and Mr. Marsters, by this time realizing that the prince's act was one of respect to a great name, did the same.

"His servant, myself," continued the prince, "acting with the embassy of Russia, am a representative with special powers. Sir, I am here now, with your acquiescence, to retain the firm of Harlowe & Marsters as counsel to the Russian embassy, to advance such treaty to a speedy consummation."

It cannot be denied that the tone and manner of the prince, as he concluded his brief oration, conveyed the idea that he was conferring a great honor upon that firm, and that if the firm did not fall over itself in its haste to accept the retainer, it at least would do so promptly and gladly.



Perhaps Mr. Marsters felt that the selection of his firm was a great honor, and that the fact that the Empire of Russia was enrolled among its clients would lift the reputation of that legal firm high among all the legal firms, not alone those of the city of New York, where it had its home, but those of the civilized earth. Undoubtedly that was his thought, for he looked gravely on the prince, and his manner took on an added dignity as he replied:

“The firm of Harlowe & Marsters is greatly honored, prince, but,” he pronounced these words with great weight, “the firm ceases to exist to-day by the retirement of Mr. Harlowe.”

Of course the prince was prepared for this announcement, yet he received it with every indication of astonishment and disappointment.

“You distress me,” he said.

“Since I am here at this moment,” continued Mr. Marsters rather regretfully than otherwise, “to complete the act of dissolution, you will perceive the firm cannot accept retainers.”

“Perhaps, sir,” insinuated the prince, “Mr. Harlowe might be induced to defer his retirement until such time as the treaty may be promulgated.”

Mr. Marsters slowly and doubtfully shook his head. His ambition was touched, and it was with sincere regret that he appreciated that honor de-



manded that the proffer should be firmly and instantaneously declined, not because of the impending dissolution of his firm, but upon the much more important ground of a previous proffer to which he, if not Mr. Harlowe, had at least committed himself; and he was further troubled by the consideration that a strict regard for honor demanded that the prince should be informed of that reason.

Looking the prince straight in the eyes, speaking impressively, yet guardedly, he said:

“I am myself anxious, and with little hope, that Mr. Harlowe should undertake one more case, which, were he to do, might interfere with your wishes and demands.”

It was a matter of no little wonder afterward, and to none more than Prince Kroupiève himself, that so astute a diplomatist and past-master of the art of indirection, did not appreciate at its full significance this reply of Mr. Marsters. True he did not know at that time that the Countess Naletoff was a guest of Mr. Marsters, and it was also true that he relied upon the importance of the connection he was offering, the value of which he exactly estimated, to tip the scales in his favor. As it was, he contented himself with merely urging his point.

“May I ask, sir,” he said, “that you will submit my proposition to the distinguished gentle-



man, and, if he does not yield at once, ask for me the honor of a personal interview? ”

“ Without your request I should have done that, for I fully appreciate the great importance of your tender.” Mr. Marsters yielded that much, though he was determined to incline his influence in the other direction.

“ Then, sir,” said the prince rising, wholly misled, and believing that he had captured Mr. Marsters through his ambition, “ I shall hold myself in readiness at my hotel to obey promptly a summons, in the event that a personal interview with Mr. Harlowe becomes necessary. I shall rely upon you, sir, should Mr. Harlowe not agree at once to become the counsel to Russia, to prevent him from reaching an irrevocable conclusion, until I can myself present my offer to him.”

Mr. Marsters bowed gravely and attended the prince as he walked across the lawn. As he reached the path by which he had come, the prince turned and with his grand air said:

“ I thank you, sir, for your great courtesy. With regret, I bid you adieu.”

He turned and walked away. Mr. Marsters stood still, watching him until he disappeared beyond the house, and then shaking his head, he said in a low voice:

“ And you want to retain us for another case, which you have not had the frankness or honesty



to declare at this time. Oh, no, prince! not if I can prevent it."

Melinda Harlowe came from the house and Mr. Marsters met her at the foot of the steps. She was much displeased; her manner showed that clearly, and affected the tone of her greeting of Marsters though he did not intend it.

"Oh, *you* are here, John," she said, extending her hand.

"Where is Chester?" he asked as he took it.

The cause of her annoyance was manifested.

"Making that precious Dale welcome. We are to have him on our hands now."

Marsters retained her hand, patting it gently, and said reproachfully:

"The husband of your dead sister, Melinda; the father of Flossie."

It seemed as if he were gently patting her hand to mitigate the sting of the reproach.

"Pshaw!" she replied, ashamed of her asperity, and all the more because Marsters had found something in it to reproach. "How you all misjudge me. I dislike him, to be sure, but only because of his influence upon Flossie. He encourages her and is her partner in all sorts of frivolities. But there, let him go. What is the meaning of this dissolution of partnership?"

Mr. Marsters, still retaining her hand, led her across the lawn, and, after bowing her into a seat



with a courtliness that seemed a part of himself, yet was withal old-fashioned, replied:

“Chester abandons the law. It is bad—very bad, but I cannot prevent it. Not yet forty, and such a great advocate!”

“What reason does he give? Is it a foreign appointment?” asked Melinda.

“Appointment?” repeated Marsters. “Oh, no! He has given up all idea of that.”

“Yet he wished it last winter,” persisted Melinda.

“True,” replied Marsters, leaning against the back of the settee. “When his old college chum, Williams, was made Secretary of State, Harlowe did expect that a foreign mission would be offered him. He was too proud, however, to admit it, or to ask for the place.”

He laughed as he went on.

“The only time Harlowe was ever seriously angry with me was when I told the Secretary that such an appointment would be acceptable. But now, months having elapsed and no offer made, he has dismissed all hopes.”

“Does he intend to marry?” Melinda asked this question sharply and abruptly.

Marsters was startled.

“Marry? Harlowe? Pshaw! No; he says he will drudge no more—that he has made all the money he wants.”



“And a great scientific discovery to which he will devote his life,” added Melinda, by way of continuing the sentence. “But I fear a woman.”

Marsters chuckled.

“Egad!” he cried, much amused; “you always have.”

Melinda resented the laugh and defended herself.

“And because I have,” she retorted sharply, “I have protected him from their designs.”

“By always having at hand a woman more charming than the one he was devoting himself to. Your strategy has commanded my admiration.”

“It is no laughing matter,” replied Melinda, seriously offended. “It has made my life one of serious responsibility.”

Marsters’ face became grave, and his voice took on a serious tone.

“Ah, Melinda! he would have been far happier had you let him marry some good woman.”

“Possibly,” she answered severely; “but he had a duty—a mission—as I had.”

“A mission which has influenced all our lives.” There was a regretful, tender echo in his voice. “A mission which has led you to refuse to become my wife; a mission which has consigned us both to lonely lives. A mistake, Melinda—a mistake.”

Melinda was staggered by the unexpected, if



familiar, attack, and it required several moments before she could rally herself, and when she did it was apparent that she was on the defensive.

"From a selfish standpoint, perhaps," she said; "but there is a higher view. You know what was found when Sister Lucy died. Her brother Chester, not her husband, had supported their household."

Marsters sighed.

"They were very happy together."

"Like two birds in the woods, looking upon life as seriously. Lucy left a child two years old. If Dale could not support a wife, could he care for a helpless babe? *I* took the child. My life has been devoted to her. What I did it was Chester's duty to do—remain unmarried and share in Flossie's care."

"No!" firmly declared Marsters. "I can't follow you. You have persuaded yourself to a wrong conclusion. Your real motive was a woman's motive. You wanted to control a man's life."

Melinda was irritated.

"Do you mean——" she began angrily.

But Marsters interrupted her masterfully.

"The truth. Every woman strives to mold some man to her liking. When she succeeds, she despises him."

Melinda ran away from the issue raised.

"Well," she said, changing the ground, "to



marry now, at his time of life, would be folly. As to his scientific humbug—well, it serves to amuse him.”

Suddenly she turned the flank of her antagonist.

“You have a visitor at your house. Who is she?”

“The Countess Naletoff.” This indifferently.

Melinda looked at Marsters keenly for a moment.

“What does it mean? Are *you* about to marry?”

“Me?” cried Marsters, startled out of his grammar.

Then he became conscious that Melinda was regarding him with anxiety, and he was pleased with his perception.

“The Countess Naletoff,” he went on teasingly, “is a charming woman—one who can excite regrets for vanished youth. But, Melinda, don’t try to mold me. *I* don’t want to be despised by *you*. The countess is a client, in whose cause I hope to interest Harlowe.”

“Oh!” exclaimed Melinda weakly, much confused, to Marsters’ enjoyment. “Well——” But what she was about to say was prevented by a bustle and noise on the veranda.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### MR. HARLOWE AND HIS DISCOVERY.

THE bustle on the veranda was occasioned by the coming of Mr. Harlowe, followed by Dale and Flossie, both of whom were filled with joy and delight. Though Melinda had viewed the return of Dale with displeasure, it was apparent that Mr. Harlowe found in it satisfaction, and was "on hospitable thoughts intent."

"Go, get your trunks, old man!" he cried, clapping Dale on the back heartily, to the great disgust of Melinda, "and come here at once. Plenty of room!"

He saw Mr. Marsters on the lawn with Melinda, and cried out:

"Ah! there you are, Marsters! Be with you in a moment."

Turning to Dale, he continued:

"Now, hurry up, Dale! The buckboard is in front with a horse that goes on two legs when he can't go on three. Flossie will go with you. So long as Chester K. Harlowe has a roof over his head, it shall shelter you, my boy."



He descended the steps, followed by the delighted pair.

“Come along, then, Flossie!” cried Dale.

“I’m to drive, dad,” said Flossie, as the pair skipped off and were lost to sight around the corner of the house.

“There they go,” said Mr. Harlowe heartily, as he crossed the lawn to his partner and sister, “the happiest and merriest pair in the universe; both children.”

“You are right,” decidedly said Melinda, with no little asperity. “James Dale is nothing but a child; never was and never will be anything but a child.”

“Oh,” replied Harlowe with a laugh, “you can’t forgive James Dale the christening of Flossie.”

Melinda, irritated and annoyed, protested by her manner, but Harlowe paid no attention to it.

“Marsters,” he asked, “you never heard that story?”

Marsters was much amused. For years the persistent efforts to control everyone about her, and especially her brother, and his agile and adroit escape without quarrel or angry words, had been a source of great amusement to Marsters. He shook his head with a smile, though he was familiar with it. But he wanted to hear Harlowe tell it again, for it teased Melinda.



"Now, Chester, you needn't tell that story," said Melinda snappishly.

"Oh," persisted Harlowe, "an epoch in our family history. We must not allow it to be forgotten. John, draw nigh and listen to the grown-up tale. When Flossie, then unnamed, came to us, Melinda wanted to call her after a sainted ancestress, who died many years ago of single blessedness, devotion to duty, and dyspepsia, and whose name was Jerusha. Dale, always wandering about the ends of the earth, you know, had just returned from a hobnobbing time with Oriental potentates, and wanted to call her Asia. Result—Melinda and he quarreled. Both were determined. The dispute was not settled when they lined up in front of the altar for the christening. When the clergyman asked for the name, both spoke at once. One said Jerusha; the other said Asia. The simultaneous enunciation produced an impression on the ear of the clergyman not unlike a composite photograph—a sound similar to both names, yet wholly unlike. And, to the infinite disgust of Melinda, and the great delight of Dale, the child came out baptized *Aspasia*!"

Marsters burst into long and hearty laughter, in which Harlowe joined, but Melinda was very indignant.

"Well," continued Harlowe, "we couldn't call a little thing like that *Aspasia*, so she drifted into



the pet name Dale had given her, and has grown up with it."

"And you shamelessly aided him," said Melinda pettishly.

She rose from her seat and walked across the lawn.

"Jerusha!" cried Harlowe, "how could I help it!"

And then, with one of those quick transitions of moods so characteristic of the man, he said to his partner, in his man-of-affairs tone:

"Well, Marsters, let us get at the papers."

"A room must be made ready for James Dale, I suppose," said Melinda, as she went toward the house.

She had yielded to the inevitable, for after witnessing the reception of Dale by her brother she saw the uselessness of struggling against his return as an inmate of their family.

"Let it be a comfortable one," said Harlowe. "He has claims upon us."

"Claims!" muttered Melinda, but in a tone not to be heard by her brother. "I wish I had the settling of the claims."

She went into the house, leaving her brother and lover together.

The moment her back was turned Harlowe had attacked the papers with his usual energy and impetuosity. Marsters detained him.



"Harlowe," he said, "before we begin on those papers I'd like to talk to you about another matter."

"Talk away, then," said Harlowe, not lifting his head from the table over which he was bent.

"Prince Kroupiève called this morning."

The high title and the singularity of the name awakened Harlowe's curiosity. He laid the papers out of his hand and gave his attention to Marsters.

"Prince Kroup—what?" he asked. "Who is this man whose name suggests a throat trouble?"

"A Russian diplomat," replied Marsters, moving in the direction of a garden chair.

"Ah!" exclaimed Harlowe, following Marsters from the table, and seating himself on the settee at ease, stretching out his legs, for he knew from Marsters' manner there was an important communication to be made. "Ah! they do have a deal of throat trouble in Russia. I'd advise him to change his name. It's ominous. Well, what does he want?"

"To retain our firm as counsel to the Russian Embassy, in the interest of the treaty now pending between the two countries—the Russian interest, of course."

Harlowe turned on Marsters a quick, keen, penetrative glance, in which the most active intelligence sparkled.



“Ah, ha!” he cried. “A shrewd move—a very shrewd move. He has learned that the Secretary of State and I are old college chums. Well, Marsters, we cannot take the offer as a tribute to the standing or ability of our firm. He merely wants to make use of my intimacy with Williams, in order to obtain a sure and close approach to our Foreign Department.”

Marsters smiled shrewdly, pleased that his partner had taken the communication in the spirit he had.

“However,” continued Harlowe carelessly, “I take no new cases. You told him so, didn’t you?”

“I told him,” replied Marsters guardedly, “that we were about to dissolve partnership.”

Harlowe nodded approvingly.

“What do they want counsel for?” asked Harlowe. “It’s the usual extradition treaty, providing for the return of criminals, isn’t it?”

The point was reached, in his intrigue against Harlowe’s further peace and leisure, when Marsters must put forward the powers of his mind.

“And something more,” he said weightily. “The treaty articles now pending contain a clause providing that an attempt against the life of the head of either government shall be considered not a political, but a criminal offense.”

“Well,” said Harlowe rather humorously, “not having a great fancy for murder or assassination,



you will pardon me if I say that that clause seems to me to be rather commendable than otherwise."

"Ah!" and Marsters, coming to close quarters, put his foot upon the settee and bent over the reclining figure of Harlowe in his earnestness; "but looking up the Russian criminal code, I find that almost anything can be construed into an attempt upon the life of the Czar—joining or persuading others to join a secret society, expressing by word or writing opinions in oppositon to governmental policy, and," becoming more impressive, "the slightest relation to those things makes one accessory thereto."

"Convenient for the Russian politicians," was Harlowe's brief and light comment.

"Why," continued Marsters, sawing the air with his right hand, as was his wont when very earnest, "why, there is a true bill of a young Russian who, believing in a parliamentary form of government for his country, and having written a pamphlet to that end, was charged with being accessory to a conspiracy against the life of the Czar, tried, convicted, and hung."

Having reached his climax, Marsters stepped back to better observe its effect upon Harlowe.

"Oh!" said that gentleman, with incredulous scorn, "but our government will never construe an alleged crime in the light of the Russian criminal code."



"Why not?" promptly urged Marsters, "since its provisions are included in the treaty articles?"

"And you want me to take that side of the question?" Harlowe stifled a yawn.

"I do not, indeed," said Marsters decidedly.

Harlowe, finding himself wholly mistaken as to the end Marsters' communication was tending, became interested, and turned to Marsters inquiringly.

Marsters answered the look by breaking ground for the real purpose he had in view.

"I have another case connected with this very treaty, and antagonistic to Kroupiève's interest."

"I won't take that, either," said Harlowe firmly and promptly, now perceiving Marsters' true drift.

"I wish I could persuade you," pleaded Marsters.

"You can't."

"It is the case of a woman in distress—a young, handsome, fascinating woman."

Harlowe impulsively assumed a sitting position, shaking his head quizzically at Marsters, and said good-humoredly:

"You old dog! You know you are attacking me on my weak side."

"She is the Countess Naletoff."

"You revel in titles this morning. It is a pretty name."



“And she is as pretty as her name,” replied Marsters insinuatingly. “Persecuted——”

But Harlowe, rising to his feet, interrupted him.

“A strong appeal, John—pretty woman, distressed female, persecuted—but it won’t do, John; it won’t do!”

Harlowe walked off a short distance quickly.

Marsters followed him, with the remark:

“She is at my house now.”

Harlowe turned quickly, with the wave of his hand, as if he would brush the persuasion aside, and said decidedly:

“Keep her there, my boy. Don’t disturb my peace of mind.”

“Let me tell you her story!” persistently pleaded Marsters.

“Not a tell!” said Harlowe. “I’m firm.”

He stopped short as a new and eager light broke over his face; then saying, rather to himself than to Marsters: “That is, I will be.”

He went quickly to the table, and opened the cabinet Joe had placed there, and took from it a bottle and a small syringe. He dipped the syringe in the bottle, filling it, and put the bottle back.

“See that?” he asked Marsters, holding before him the syringe. Then, lifting the skin of his wrist, he injected the liquid it contained. “I inoculate myself with firmness.”



Marsters started forth in horror and alarm.

“For Heaven’s sake, Chester!” he cried, reproach mingling in his tones, “you have not contracted the morphine habit?”

“No, sir!” replied Harlowe in profound disgust, returning the syringe to the cabinet, and taking out the bottle again. “No, sir! This is my great scientific discovery. This is what will enroll my name among the world’s benefactors—Bacon, Harvey, Jenner, Koch——”

“Nonsense!” ejaculated Marsters.

“Of course,” said Harlowe very earnestly, “pioneers must expect incredulity. Gallileo was persecuted, and Columbus reviled. See here, Marsters! What is the cause of the imperfections of mankind? It’s inherent weaknesses! Isn’t that so?”

“Why, of course,” said Marsters, but with an air and tone of one who said to himself: “I can admit that much, but won’t be entrapped any further.”

“Precisely!” said Harlowe, taking firm hold of that much advantage in his proposed argument. “Precisely! Now, if a man had at his command the means by which he could be firm when weak, yielding when obstinate, brave when timid, moral when immoral—in short, the right thing at the right time—he would always be successful, wouldn’t he?”



“Yes,” admitted Marsters, seating himself on the settee; “but where is this wonderful means?”

“Here!” exclaimed Harlowe enthusiastically, patting the bottle he held. “Here! my boy, here!”

“Ridiculous!” said Marsters.

“That’s right!” exclaimed Harlowe in derision. “Condemn first and listen afterward. Do you understand the germ theory of disease?”

Marsters admitted that he did to a limited degree, and leaned back prepared to listen to Harlowe, for though he was perfectly aware of the eccentric streak in his partner’s composition, yet so often had great results come from that erratic and brilliant mentality, which in the beginning seemed to be based solely in eccentricity, that he had learned to listen patiently before he passed judgment. And he really did have a profound respect for the great side of Harlowe, when it was in operation uninfluenced by his eccentricities.

“Bacteria,” began Harlowe didactically, “little creatures so minute that they cannot be seen without the aid of a microscope, get into the human system—blood, organs—and create disease. They float in the air, and we inhale them; they exist in the water, and we drink them. Certain kinds produce certain diseases—one kind smallpox, another cholera, another consumption. Now, scientific people have discovered that certain



preparations called lymph serum, if injected into the blood, will kill these little creatures—and, of course, kill the disease. Jab ”—and he suited the action of the word—“ in goes one kind of lymph, and smallpox is cured; jab, in goes another kind of lymph, and the cholera hospitals are depopulated.”

Marsters, closely attentive and with keen eyes upon Harlowe, muttered to himself:

“ I come to do law business, and get a lecture on medicine.”

“ Now,” continued Harlowe, warming to his subject, “ an advance has been made. A genius has found that, by inoculating the system with bichloride of gold, a drunkard becomes a sober, self-supporting member of society.”

Marsters was one of those who firmly clung to the old-fashioned idea that inebriety was moral depravity, and not the result of a diseased condition of the nerves or organs. So, in his disgust with the trend of Harlowe’s demonstration, he snarled out:

“ You want to hunt up that genius.”

Harlowe stopped short, casting a shooting glance at Marsters.

“ Do you know, Marsters,” he said, “ that that was dangerously near a joke. But don’t interrupt. Drunkenness being a disease of the nervous system, the home of which is in the brain, it is the



circulation of the blood which carries the remedy to the brain and to a cure. Do you follow?"

"Slowly," replied Marsters, wondering where Harlowe was coming out.

"Now," Harlowe went on, "phrenology proves that each of the emotions and passions is located in some particular part of the brain."

He looked earnestly at Marsters, following up with "Eh? Eh? Eh?" eagerly.

"Well, what follows?" asked Marsters, utterly abroad.

"My great discovery," said Harlowe conclusively. "*My* great advance on previous discoveries. Determine the drugs that affect each part of the brain, and you have the perfect man—that is, so long as the influence of the drug lasts. For instance, a man is deficient in firmness; find the proper drug, inoculate him, and he is firm to stand up under temptation."

"Stuff and nonsense!" exclaimed Marsters, rising to his feet.

"Oh, I expect that from you," retorted Harlowe. "Your general tendency is to skepticism. Locate that quality in the brain, find the drug to influence it, inject it into your circulatory system, and instantaneously you are an intelligent and liberal-minded man."

"The idea of influencing the emotions by drugs," said Marsters, unmindful of the sarcasm.



“Why not?” asked Harlowe. “Is not anger an emotion? And have not the homeopaths a remedy—a drug—for that, which they apply successfully?”

“Have you found a cure for lunacy?” asked Marsters, who had now listened to the end, and regarded Harlowe’s exposition as wild and fantastic twaddle.

“No,” replied Harlowe soberly. “But I have found that by judicious inoculation of quinine a man’s firmness is largely increased; that burnt brandy—burnt brandy, sir—will make him yielding and submissive. Within the minute I have inoculated myself with quinine. You cannot persuade me.”

He went back to the table and replaced the bottle in the cabinet.

“Well, Harlowe,” said Marsters, with a grim smile, “I’ll yield without burnt brandy. If it is effective, I wish you would use it on yourself. However, you will see the countess, won’t you? You see, I’m somewhat embarrassed as to her, for I have promised you would listen to her story.”

“Oh, I’ll listen to her story,” said Harlowe, busying himself with the papers at the table. “I have the means of resistance at hand. In the meantime, let me have the papers, and I will look them over alone in my room.”

He gathered them up and carried them with



him to the house. Reaching the veranda, he turned to Marsters and said quizzically:

"I'm afraid, Marsters, you have become somewhat infatuated with your countess. You'd better let me inoculate you with a little quinine."

Marsters made a gesture of disgust and protest.

"No?" asked Harlowe with assumed surprise. "Oh, very well, then. It might save you from her fascinations, though."

He went into the house with a laugh, leaving Marsters to himself.



## CHAPTER IX.

COUNTESS MURA NALETOFF.

JOE, returning with the spectacles for which he had been dispatched, turned the current of Mr. Marsters' thoughts.

"Say!" exclaimed Joe; "here's your glasses, and Misser Bentley sed dat de countis is er comin' right now."

Joe had barely time to deliver his message when Flossie ran in by the path between the house and the wall. She had returned from the village alone, for her father had been captured by Michaelovitch and carried in triumph into the presence of the prince.

As she ran in she cried excitedly:

"Oh, where's uncle? Mr. Bentley is bringing a lady—and such a grand lady."

An opinion immediately confirmed by Joe in an undertone:

"Dat's right. She's a peach!"

"Then meet them, Flossie," said Mr. Marsters, "and tell Bentley not to take the lady into the house, but to bring her here."



Before Flossie could turn to perform the errand, Bentley made his appearance, escorting a lady who by no means looked her thirty years. Flossie was wholly right in her application of the adjective grand, for the Countess Naletoff was in every particular the *grande dame*, possessing, also, what is often denied ladies of her rank—exceptional beauty—and yet a beauty far removed from our American and English types.

“Thank you for your attention, Mr. Bentley,” said the countess, in a sweet, musical voice, with hardly a perceptible accent. “I do now see my good friend Marsters.”

She saw Flossie—a very pretty picture of youth—gazing upon her with unconcealed admiration.

“Ah!” cried the countess, “and who is this sweet young lady?”

“This is Miss Flossie,” replied Mr. Marsters, advancing, “the niece of Mr. Harlowe.”

“Come to me, child,” said the countess, a command instantly obeyed by Flossie, for the young girl had surrendered at discretion to the charms of the elder lady. “How gracefully the name rests upon you! Surely it was an inspiration to so name you.”

“It was the name my father gave me when I was very little,” replied Flossie very modestly.

“Inspired by proud love,” added the countess, as she stooped to kiss the young girl. “Ah! you



were born to inspire love. Youth still crowns you with the apple blossoms of white, and pink, and gold. Time has beckoned me far enough on his road to make me regret the grace of your years."

"Be seated, countess," put in Mr. Marsters, impatient to push the business which had brought the countess. "I have been partially successful."

"As I could quite believe," replied the countess.

Leading Flossie, she moved across the lawn in the direction of the settee Mr. Marsters had indicated. It seemed as if she clung to Flossie in the assurance that in the young girl she had one friend in the family of Mr. Harlowe, however impotent in her cause she might be.

When the countess was seated Flossie brought a low stool, which she placed at the feet of her newly found friend, seated herself, and looked up in silent adoration—an act which the countess, taking it as a tribute to her charms, as it undoubtedly was, rewarded with an impulsive embrace.

"I have broken ground, countess," said Mr. Marsters; "now everything depends on you."

"On me, dear friend?" queried the lady, and not without symptoms of alarm. "Explain!"

"At present Mr. Harlowe refuses to take your case," said Mr. Marsters. "I rely now upon the sympathy you can excite by your story."



"Surely," said the countess, "the simple story of a distressed, persecuted woman, driven from her home, a stranger in a strange land, is eloquence enough."

"Mr. Harlowe," said Mr. Marsters very gravely, "has to-day declined a retainer from Prince Kroupiève."

The countess, much alarmed, abruptly rose to her feet.

"The Prince Kroupiève! Here in this place? Oh, my God!"

She was so much agitated that Marsters hastened to her, while Flossie stood aside, frightened by the energy of the fright of the countess.

"Do not be alarmed, countess," said Mr. Marsters reassuringly. "Be comforted! There is nothing to fear."

"Oh, you know not the man," cried the countess, still possessed by her awful fear of the man. "He has agents everywhere."

"I assure you, countess, Prince Kroupiève is powerless for evil here."

The countess made a gesture of hopeless incredulity.

"You are my guest," continued Mr. Marsters; "he may learn that and welcome, but nothing more. I will guarantee that."

"And of my plans?" persisted the countess. "Who knows? In this very house he may have



spies, who shall know what I do, what I say, what I think."

"Fear not," said Mr. Marsters firmly. "I pledge my American citizenship for your safety. Our lives are simple, and the air we breathe is not favorable to secret agents, or to conspiracies. Spies, intrigues, and invasion of personal rights do not thrive here."

The countess, quieted, resumed her seat; but unconvinced.

"Now, Mr. Bentley," said Mr. Marsters, turning to Tom, "tell Mr. Harlowe that he has a caller."

Tom, with a bow, went into the house.

"Can my uncle help you in your trouble, countess?" asked Flossie sympathetically.

"Yes, child; Mr. Harlowe has the power," and the countess smiled upon the girl.

"Then," positively said Flossie, "he will."

"And why, child?"

"Because he is so good and you are so lovely."

The countess laughed pleasantly and embraced Flossie again.

Mr. Marsters adroitly seized the opportunity Flossie had given him to get in the hint to the countess to exercise her fascinations upon Mr. Harlowe.

"By that Flossie means that Mr. Harlowe is



susceptible to feminine charms. And permit me to suggest that he is very sympathetic."

"If you coax him he will not refuse," added Flossie, drawing upon her experience without thought of the applicability of the advice to the countess. "I can coax him into anything."

"Oh, child, it is a great weapon of our sex; but you see I am not his pet."

All this time Joe, unnoticed, had been an interested witness, and his sympathies for the countess, without knowing why, had been deeply stirred. Unrestrained by the rank, dignity, and elegance of the lady he was impelled, first by his sympathy and again by the thought that it was time that he put himself on record in a matter which so intimately concerned the firm of Harlowe & Marsters, to the horror of Mr. Marsters, to sidle up to the countess and proffer this advice:

"Say," he said. "Jes' you jolly up Misser Harlowe a bit."

"*Joli!*" exclaimed the countess, amazed perhaps as much by the impudence of Joe as at the advice. "Surely that is the French for pretty. Pretty him up, is it?"

Mr. Marsters moved toward Joe, strong in the impulse to box his ears for his impertinent interference, but those awful organs—particularly useful to Joe—were saved by the timely appearance



of Mr. Harlowe, thus diverting Mr. Marsters from his purpose.

Mr. Marsters advanced to present Mr. Harlowe to the countess, who rose in greeting.

"Countess, Mr. Harlowe, my partner."

As the two exchanged bows Mr. Marsters said to Harlowe:

"Mr. Harlowe, I have promised the countess a courteous hearing of her story."

Harlowe gallantly bowed, and with the remark:

"The sex of the countess insures that. The lady compels it."

"Sir!" as she swept a profound obeisance.  
"You are gracious."

"A gallant of the old school," was her thought.

While these courtesies were being exchanged Marsters had gone to Tom, saying:

"Get Flossie away, and go yourself as well."

Catching Joe, he administered the box prevented by Harlowe's appearance, fairly cuffing him into the house, following himself.

Bentley had not such an easy task. To all of Bentley's gestures and beckonings, Flossie merely tossed her head in contempt, having been fascinated by the countess, and very anxious to learn the result of the appeal to her uncle. But Tom becoming imperative, she went to him to tell him to be quiet. It was a mistake, as she found, for



Tom, taking her hands when she refused to go quietly, fairly dragged her away by the upper path.

"Please be seated again," said Mr. Harlowe to his visitor.

He moved the settee for her into a position where she could be better shielded from the sun, and brought a chair for himself, thinking, as he did so, that the countess was a remarkably fine woman.

"I am at your command," he said as he seated himself.

"Mr. Marsters has told you who I am and my mission?"

The lady lifted her eyes to his face, and scanning his features, seemed to find something to place confidence in.

"Mr. Marsters has told me nothing," he replied courteously, "except that you are the Countess Naletoff, and in trouble."

Conscious of an effort in this reply to be agreeable Mr. Harlowe was annoyed, for he had promised himself to be as steel against her appeal.

The countess hesitated a moment or two before she began her story, the while she again scanned the features of the lawyer as if she would read his thoughts. So long did she hesitate that Mr. Harlowe became embarrassed, and was about to frame a polite speech, when she began, in her sweet, low tone, all the more charming because of the quaint-



ness of her precise pronunciation and the unusual form of her sentences.

"I am from Russia," she said at length. "You will pardon me if I say I am rich. In the province where lies my estate, is also the Prince Kroupiève."

Harlowe started in surprise and murmured:

"Ah! the Prince Kroupiève!"

"You know him?" asked the countess earnestly.

"No," replied Mr. Harlowe. "I heard his name for the first time to-day."

The countess was reassured and she went on:

"I say my estates. I do not know that they are not confiscate. The prince is a powerful man at the Court of St. Petersburg, for he possesses the confidence of our Imperial Master, and by Alexander is employed on many delicate missions. Though neighbors, the Naletoffs and the Kroupièves have not been friends for many generations—indeed, for long years they have been enemies. There have been wild fights in past times and in the more recent ones duels. The blood of each has been shed by the other."

"Ah!" said Harlowe to himself, "this is going to be interesting."

"But the past did not prevent the prince from selecting me for his distinguished favor. At the Court his attentions were thrust upon me. When



his suit, which was for my dishonor, did fail, then he did me the honor"—there was a perceptible shrug of the shoulders—"to offer his hand and title. Though his new suit was approved—nay, almost commanded by Alexander—the honor"—there was slight sarcasm in the tone—"was declined."

"Positively," said Harlowe to himself, "a most fascinating woman."

"My pledges had gone to a young nobleman of the province."

The countess turned her eyes on the lawyer to perceive the effect she had produced, and he hitched his chair an inch or two closer to her.

"The prince," she went on, "refused to consider himself dismissed, for he has the courage of his love."

The lawyer hitched his chair still closer, remarking gallantly:

"He had an inspiring object."

The countess bowed in response to the compliment and went on:

"He sought a quarrel with my *fiancé*, but I averted the duel. It was not long after this that the Third Division of the Imperial Police,—the secret service,—found charges against the young nobleman who had received my vows. The prince is powerful with the secret police. My young



nobleman, so innocent, was banished to Siberia, and there did die of the cruelties of the place."

"What inhumanity!" exclaimed Mr. Harlowe, shocked into speech.

"The prince again pressed the honor; it was again declined. But coldness and seclusion did not avail me. The Third Division of the Imperial Police did charge that I—I, a loyal servant of Alexander—had relations with the Nihilists, and I was banished from the Court and ordered to my estates. The prince is powerful with the secret police."

"The Russian way of making love is unique, upon my word," said Harlowe to himself, giving increased attention to the countess.

"The prince followed to the province and renewed his suit," continued the lady. "It was again declined. Then came persecutions. First, it was a brother; again, an uncle, until, by the charges of the Third Division, one after another were taken from me to Siberia to die. After each refusal his suit was renewed, and each refusal was followed by another disaster, until finally I stood alone, of all my blood."

"It was infamous!" cried Harlowe, starting to his feet in his agitation.

Suddenly he became aware that he was deeply interested and had not in the least degree resisted her story, but had been wholly swept away by it.



"I'm interested—sympathizing," he said, astounded. And then turning to the countess with a bow said: "Pardon me!" He went up to the table, saying as he did: "A practical test for my theory!"

The countess was surprised by the abrupt manner in which her listener, so attentive, had left her, and the singularity of his manner. She watched Mr. Harlowe go to the cabinet and take a vial and syringe from it and inoculate himself.

"Ah!" she cried to herself, "my friend is given to morphine."

Mr. Harlowe returned to his seat, firmness and determination written on his face. His change of demeanor was so great that the countess was disturbed, and it was with great difficulty that she took up her story where she had been interrupted.

"Nor did the persecutions of the prince end with these acts," she went on. "My valued attendants—serfs—all who loved me, were one after another taken from me, until it became fatal to love or befriend me."

"A story of refined cruelty," commented Mr. Harlowe without abating a jot his judicial air.

But he said to himself, "And such a lovely creature!"

"I fled to Paris. Spies swarmed about me, and still I was persecuted."

"Prince Kroupiève followed you to Paris with



his spies?" asked Mr. Harlowe, surprised out of his judicial attitude.

"Yes; wherever I went I was followed; even my domestic servants were bought, and became spies upon me. So, then I fled to America, where for some time I have had peace."

Mr. Harlowe moved from his chair to a seat on the settee, beside the countess, saying:

"Of course! Of course!"

"But I am threatened with a new danger. If this treaty, which is now pending between America and Russia, is consummated, I shall be deprived of refuge even here."

"How can it affect you?" asked Harlowe incredulously.

"It is not difficult for the secret police to make a criminal. Already I am charged with conspiring against the life of the Emperor."

"Ha!" ejaculated Mr. Harlowe, remembering Marsters' remark on the pending treaty and the Russian criminal code.

"The charge is false," continued the countess vigorously. "The Naletoffs have always been loyal. But that it is false helps me not. If this treaty is closed, my extradition will be at once demanded."

Harlowe rose from his seat, pacing up and down, much agitated.

"I see! I see!" he said. "Yes, there is the in-



iquity. It is—why, to return you to Russia would be to condemn you to death!”

“Precisely,” quietly remarked the countess.

Harlowe, shocked by the certainty of such a result, so composedly expressed by the countess, returned to his seat by her side.

“But,” he asked, “what does the prince gain by such a course?”

“The power of life or death.”

“Over you?”

The countess nodded her head in acquiescence.

“The prince is a fierce wooer. Powerful at the Court he will say to me, on this side is my hand, the name of Kroupiève, freedom. On that, conviction, Siberia, death.”

This was too much for the equanimity of Mr. Harlowe. He sprang to his feet, excited.

“In a long and somewhat varied career,” he began oratorically, but broke off suddenly with an impatient gesture. “Oh, hang that! I—I never heard anything to equal this. A game of diplomatic chess with nations for pawns and a woman for a stake.”

“In my extremity I appeal to you to save me from so horrible a fate,” pleaded the countess.

“Horrible!” cried Harlowe, turning to her. “I should say it was. So sweet! So winsome! To be diplomatized into marriage in such a manner!



Protect you? Why, I'd hide my face from the sight of man in shame forever after if I didn't——"

He stopped in blank amazement; then said in the same tone and manner:

"I'm deeply sympathetic—haven't resisted a bit."

Again, to the surprise of the countess, he rushed to the cabinet and took from it the same vial he had a moment before taken out, looked at it, put it to his nose.

"Burnt brandy!" he cried in a tone of profound satisfaction. "Burnt brandy, by all that is holy! I inoculated myself for a submissive yielding. My theory is proved beyond question. It is fate! It is destiny!"

He went back to the countess, his face aglow, and, bowing profoundly before her, he said:

"Madame, I take your case."



## CHAPTER X.

### DALE'S ASTOUNDING NEWS.

DALE and Flossie had reached the railway station whither they were bound before Michaelovitch had caught up with them. As Dale stepped from the buckboard the spy touched him upon the shoulder and said that the prince must see Dale at once; indeed was most impatient.

"Then," said Dale, "let me first arrange to have my trunks, which are here, taken to Edgemere. If the prince cannot wait until I escort my daughter back to her home, why, she must go alone then."

Michaelovitch had been filled with the fear that Dale was escaping the neighborhood, but, satisfied as he was as to the injustice of the suspicion he had entertained, nevertheless he was anxious that Dale should go to the prince to reveal the whereabouts of the countess; so, while he consented to a delay sufficient to arrange for the transportation of Dale's baggage, he would not to that involved in accompanying Flossie to Edgemere.

Therefore Dale, telling Flossie that he was sum-



moned to a business he could not neglect, and that he would make his way back to Edgemere as best he could, sent her off alone with pouting lips, displeased that she was robbed of her playmate so soon.

While Dale superintended the mounting of his trunks on an express wagon, Michaelovitch lit another cigar and awaited Dale with the necessary patience.

Having completed his work Dale joined the spy.

"I am at your service, most mighty and puissant Rodion," he said airily. "Give me one of your excellent cigars, oh, Michaelovitch! and we will discuss affairs of state."

"You jest, light-hearted friend," replied Rodion, falling into Dale's humor, and handing his cigar case; "but the affair I would talk of is weighty."

"Oh!" exclaimed Dale, lighting his cigar.

"Yes; it is the Countess Naletoff."

"How much does she weigh?" asked Dale, taking a long pull at his cigar with evident enjoyment.

Rodion stared at him.

"You say that the countess is the affair," explained Dale, "and that the affair is weighty. Ergo, the countess Naletoff must be weighty, and I ask how much."



"You would find a laugh in everything. But you have not seen the countess, or you would not ask the question."

"Never has the beauteous, or otherwise, creature gladdened these eyes of mine," replied Dale, and suddenly changing his mode of speech, added, "but, my dear Rodion, you have taken a tumble to yourself. When we talked about the countess at Edgemere, an hour ago or more, she was a matter of little concern to the prince, and——"

"And you were provoked," broke in Rodion, "that I would not give you the confidence of my master."

"No, my friend. But because you took me for such a fool as to think I could be deluded by the first falsehood that fell to your tongue."

"Then I will not make the same error now. But first, there is no mistake about the countess being here—in this neighborhood?"

"None whatever; no more than that your master, as you call him, has a real reason for desiring to know her whereabouts."

"I will conceal nothing. Know, then, that the prince is very anxious to find her."

"That he may pay his devoirs," mimicked Dale.

"Ah! You hold the evasion against me yet. Here is the truth. The countess is not only a lady of high rank, but a very rich noblewoman, whose estates adjoin those of the prince. And



she is a great beauty. For her beauty the prince does love her. For her wealth he would espouse her, since, added to his own, it would open his way to power and distinction second only to the Czar himself. Now his enemies by cunning lies have poisoned her mind against him, and persuaded her to leave the country. The prince would find her that from his own lips she may learn the truth and the injuries his enemies did do to him. Now you have the truth."

With seeming frankness Michaelovitch had concealed the real fact with a plausible tale. However, Dale, too indifferent to care, was easily satisfied.

"My dear Rodion, I did not intend to conceal my discovery—a discovery which, by the way, was quite by accident, reflecting no credit upon my skill."

"As all great discoveries are made," amiably commented the spy. "Come, let us go to the prince; he is impatient."

They went at once to the hotel, and just before Michaelovitch ushered Dale into the presence of the prince he whispered:

"Do not let the prince see that you know his story, nor let him imagine that you think you have made a discovery of great value and importance to him."

He then opened the door, announcing his com-



panion, and, closing it noiselessly, left Dale with the prince.

“Ah, Dale!” cried the prince most graciously. “Welcome! You did do us great service in seizing the conditions at Edgemere with such intelligence. I am just returned from there.”

“Then you saw my brother-in-law?”

“No,” replied the prince; “I did not have the honor. I did see, however, Mr. Marsters, as you did advise—a charming man—and did, I think, advance the business well.”

“Yes,” said Dale, “Mr. Marsters was there when I left.”

“I do hold myself here now, to go to Edgemere if necessity requires, which I do not think it will, or if Mr. Marsters sends for me, which I do not think he will.”

“Then I am quite likely to be the messenger, if there is to be one,” said Dale, “for I am about to take up my residence for a while with Mr. Harlowe.”

“Ah, indeed!” exclaimed the prince, a shrewd expression momentarily flashing across his face, “that is well. But, my dear friend Dale, Rodion did tell me that you have learned that a lady of my acquaintance is in the neighborhood—the Countess Naletoff?”

“That is true,” replied Dale promptly. “I learned it quite accidentally, for I was pursuing



no inquiries, and caught at the mention of the name, as I remembered hearing you say on one occasion to Michaelovitch that you would like to know where the lady was."

"Yes," said the prince inquiringly, "and where is she?"

"Why," replied Dale, smiling, "somewhat to my astonishment, for I cannot see how the acquaintanceship arose, she is the guest of Mr. Marsters."

If Dale wanted proof of the deep interest of the prince in the finding of the countess, it was supplied in the extraordinary effect his communication produced upon that gentleman.

He stared at Dale with fixed eyes, a wild expression flashing in them, while, his color coming and going, he stood as one paralyzed.

"Marsters!" he breathed rather than spoke. "The guest of Marsters! Marsters—of the firm of Harlowe & Marsters?"

Dale was a heedless sort of person, but he must have been a dull one also, which he was not, had not his intelligence told him that in the agitation of the prince was to be seen another lie of Michaelovitch—a desire to find the countess upon the part of the prince far deeper than the wily spy had led him to suppose. More than this, he now saw clearly what had been a mere surmise before, that this desire was clearly connected with the



business the prince had with Harlowe & Marsters—how or in what way, however, he was just as ignorant. The immediate effect of this recognition on Dale was to put him on guard against further involvement in what he had called “the muddle.”

“So,” muttered the prince, apparently oblivious of the presence of Dale. “So! She calls a check on the first move in the game.”

A new thought broke in upon him.

“Ah!” he cried, throwing up his head and lifting his eyebrows—a characteristic trick of manner. “Yes, yes! What was it the Marsters did say? He would have the Harlowe in another case which, if he took it, would interfere with my desires.”

He paced up and down the apartment with long strides, his arms folded, with the thumb and forefinger of his left hand playing with his lower lip. Then he began to mutter to himself in Russian. Dale, being familiar with the language, could, by dint of effort at listening, grasp the intelligence of the words.

“Oh, yes; I can see it now; it is very plain. The Marsters is one of your honorable fools—what they call a soul of honor—and upon my word the prince, who held himself superior to him, was the fool, who did not appreciate his simplicity.”



He was silent for a time, still pacing up and down, when he broke out again, still in his native tongue:

“Oh, yes; it is very plain! The countess has secured the weapon. Well, then, the next best thing is knowing that that weapon will be used against you. Good! I have not the weapon, but have that knowledge.”

Again he paced up and down, and again he broke out:

“It is well, after all. There must always be one mistake in every enterprise. Good! I have made mine at the very outset, and it is not irretrievable, but it is embarrassing. Ah! It would be more—it would be ridicule—if it were known that Alexander’s great diplomat had been thus tricked by a simple lawyer not of high degree. But it can be concealed; I have not made anyone a confidant of my purposes or the reason of them.”

Suddenly he seemed to realize that Dale was present. He turned with an instant change of manner, again the polished, self-contained prince.

“I thank you, Dale,” he said in English, “for your information. It has astonished me for many reasons, which, after all, are unimportant. So the countess is the guest of Mr. Marsters. She does have a courteous host. I presume she will receive me there.”

“Oh, yes!” carelessly replied Dale. “I see no



reason why she should not. She only arrived last night, and, as I understand it, will remain but a short time."

The prince glanced keenly at Dale, but gave expression merely to the ejaculation:

"Ah!"

But after a moment he said:

"I do not think the necessity for a second visit to Edgemere will arise. Your brother-in-law does retire from the law—to engage, no doubt, in diplomacy, as you told me yesterday he had hopes of doing. Well, into the ranks of the noble brotherhood I will welcome him. And so you become a member of the Harlowe family. That also is well."

There was a knock at the door, and in obedience to the command of the prince to enter, Michaelovitch made his appearance with a letter.

Glancing at it, the prince said carelessly:

"From Mr. Marsters."

Tearing off the envelope, he read the letter attentively, but without any betrayal of emotion to the two observantly attendant upon him. Having concluded his reading, and as he refolded it, he said to Rodion:

"We return to New York as quickly as possible. I do not again go to Edgemere."

Rodion bowed and retired to make the necessary preparations.



"Your brother-in-law," said the prince to Dale, "does decline to accept the offer which I did make to him."

"Ah!" returned Dale. "Then he insists upon retiring from the practice of the law."

"Upon the contrary, he has accepted another retainer—has taken another case, which, in the language of the honorable Mr. Marsters, will, he fears, prove antagonistic to my interests."

Then Dale saw a little further into the "muddle." The interests which Mr. Harlowe had newly assumed and those of the prince were at variance. Of this he made no expression, but merely said:

"And you return to New York at once?"

"Yes," replied the prince, "but you will remain here, an inmate of the family of your brother-in-law."

This much was said with an air of command, as if laying down instructions; but he changed his tone and continued more pleasantly:

"My dear Dale, there are some things occurring in this country of yours, or rather about to occur, in which I am deeply interested. In some of these things your brother-in-law will now also be interested. I should have desired to have had him associated with me."

He stopped as if he had ended all he had to say upon the subject, leaving Dale for the instant



undetermined as to whether or not he was dismissed from the service of the prince.

Dale was about to ask a plainer expression of the prince's meaning, when the latter spoke again, and in a careless tone:

"I should like you to inform me, as you will be an inmate of the family, and therefore close to him——"

"Pardon, prince," broke in Dale unceremoniously, "don't say that which will be embarrassing to hear, and unpleasant to resent."

The prince looked up angrily, and would have spoken had not Dale forestalled him.

"Evidently," continued Dale, "your interests and those of my brother-in-law clash. What those interests are, on either side, I neither know nor care, nor shall I endeavor to discover. That they have assumed an antagonistic phase is apparently the outcome of to-day. Neither shall I make an effort to determine that. But, since they are antagonistic, and I must choose on which side I must stand, bound as I am to my brother-in-law by obligations I can never repay, that choice must be on the side of Mr. Harlowe."

"Ah!"

The sneer under the waxed mustache was marked. Without heeding it, Dale went on:

"I have been willing to assist you in all ways comporting with the conscience of a gentleman; I



have been proud of the confidence with which you have honored me; and grateful for the value which you, not myself, have placed on the service I have had the happiness to render you; but I have been most unfortunate in the impression I have made upon you if you can suppose for one moment that I could abuse the hospitality offered me in affection and good will."

The arrogant prince passed out of sight, and the wily Russ and diplomatist came into view.

"My dear Dale, of what are you talking in this severe manner?" asked the prince with well-assumed surprise. "I merely meant to say that, as events were likely to separate us, I did not want to lose knowledge of you, and to ask that you would inform me of your health and friendship, and of opportunities when we could meet in a social way."

"I thank Your Serene Highness," replied Dale most formally, not one whit misled. "I may be a man of little aspiration, looking upon the duties and obligations of life lightly. But I have counted myself at least a man of honor. I would not have you believe I could be a spy. I cannot conceive the distress that would drive me into being one. I bid Your Excellency farewell."

Dale went from the presence of the prince with a greater dignity than he was ever known before to assume.



The prince did not respond to Dale's profound bow, but sat quite still in his chair for several moments after the door had closed.

"Upon my word!" he finally aroused himself to say, "upon my word! my friend Dale, this is the first time I have given you respect. Is this the character of all the Americans? I meet it at every turn. Is it the result of free government and American civilization? If this be what I have to contend with, then my enterprise is increased in the difficulties with which it will be surrounded. Gold and bribes will have less effect, then, than has been my experience in the courts of Europe and the East. But, my good friend Dale, whether you are a spy or not, whether you want to be a spy or not, and whether you will be a spy or not, my spy you will be. The brains of Alexis Kroupiève will compel you to give up the information you have, however deep you bury it—even that which you have and do not know you possess—whenever we meet. And I will see that it is as often as I need you. One check in this game is all I will sustain."

END OF BOOK I.



## BETWEEN BOOKS.

WHAT had been a conjecture in the early part of 1893 was in October stated as an assured fact.

Articles of treaty *were* pending between the two great powers, the United States of America and the Empire of Russia.

Curiosity was rife as to the nature of the proposed treaty. The prevailing opinion was that it was merely that of extradition, and this served to allay apprehension as to the consequences of an act of government in which, contrary to the spirit of our institutions, the people had no voice.

One portion of the population, and a very small one, to be sure, however, was certain that a great international crime was about to be perpetrated, and that Russia was endeavoring to gain an advantage by which it could stretch forth its arms and take into its fatal embrace such of its subjects as had fled from the wrath of the Bear and taken refuge under the wings of the Eagle. This portion was made up of those who had offended in one at least of the many ways possible against the law and the ukase of the Russian Emperor, many, if indeed not all, political offenders, some of whom, even, had known Siberia; and of all those who,



having been concerned in efforts to alter existing conditions of things in the lands of their birth, and having found residence therein uncomfortable and dangerous as a consequence, had fled hither.

These people were active and aggressive. Through the press, and by pamphlet and speech, they forced a discussion which, before October was past, created an uneasy feeling, if not of opposition to the treaty, at least of a fear that our Government was yielding too much to a power to which it was anxious to show its gratitude for signal service at a critical period of its existence. A rumor, the origin of which could not be traced, but which, being widely circulated, strengthened the discussion, was to the effect that the Czar, anxious to gain an advantage in the consummation of the proposed treaty, had dispatched to this country a trusted confidant—a nobleman of distinction—armed with vast powers of definite settlement of all disputed points, but who was concealed behind the Russian Embassy, and was officially unknown to our Government. The only basis for this rumor was the presence of a distinguished Russian in this country at the time, who seemed to be far more concerned in sight-seeing and preserving his incognito than in affairs of government.

Opposition to the treaty developed to such an extent that the Government evidently thought it



well to take cognizance of it, without abandoning its position of traditional inviolable secrecy, by permitting the information to escape through those well-regulated "leaks" all governments possess, that the treaty was merely an extradition treaty, differing in no essential respect from those existing with other countries, already made and confirmed, and did not touch political offenders.

This checked the increasing apprehension and opposition, but did not satisfy the whilom Russian and Polish subjects. They insisted with much spirit and persistency that there was a clause in the articles providing that all who were guilty of an attempt against the life of the head of either Government should be regarded as extraditable criminals; that this would be proper if the same interpretation of the provision obtained in both countries, but such would not be the case, and that acts which in the United States would be deemed merely as political discussion, and of which here no official or judicial cognizance could be taken, in Russia could be construed into a conspiracy against the life of the Czar, and "an accomplished crime," falling under the scope and meaning of Section 242 of the Russian Criminal Code, which they quoted:

"Sec. 242. The ill-contrivement against the life, or person, or dignity of the Lord and Em-



peror is regarded as an accomplished crime, not only in case an attempt has already been made by the wrongdoer to put his criminal intentions into operation, but also as soon as he has started any preparations whatever for this purpose, either by urging another person to take part in those intentions, or by plotting a conspiracy, or starting a secret society for that end, or by joining such society or conspiracy, or else by expression either by word or in writing of his opinions and suppositions on this subject, or in what other manner soever."

And it was also shown that Sections 241 and 243 provided that all whose offenses fell under Section 242 were subject to capital punishment.

In illustration, it was cited on authority that a student of the University of Kiev, who believed that Russia should have a representative parliament, and in whose possession were found pamphlets advocating that reform, was arrested, tried, convicted, and hanged—probably the very case to which Mr. Marsters referred in his urgency upon Mr. Harlowe to take the case of the Countess Naletoff. It was also urged that embracing the clause opposed in the treaty in all extradition proceedings, the United States authorities could not go behind the findings of the Russian courts and review their proceedings, but must accept the cer-



tified findings of such courts as true, final, and conclusive.

The discussion led to this result: While the State Department made no official admission that a treaty was pending, it accepted all briefs and arguments bearing on the subject, and even discussed with favored ones the points pro and con.







## BOOK TWO.

### *THE DEMONSTRATION.*

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#### CHAPTER I.

##### FOREIGN METHODS.

HAVING succumbed to the appeal of Countess Naletoff, Mr. Harlowe addressed himself to her cause with all of that ardor and energy potent in his rise in his profession.

To all comments on his sudden change of purpose he insisted that it had been controlled by fate, as expressed in his mistake with his vials. But Mr. Marsters knew, as he had hoped they would be, that Harlowe's sympathies had been deeply stirred; that his soul revolted against the persecutions to which the lady had been subjected; and against the governmental tyranny of which she had been made a victim, and which were so repugnant to his republican training. There was in Mr. Harlowe a vein of knight-errantry, and he burned to redress the wrongs of the hapless fair one who had thrown herself upon his sympathies.



On the day following the visit of Prince Kroupiève to Edgemere, a foreigner, evidently a Russian, took up quarters in Northport. Foreigners were not so uncommon in that village as to excite unusual curiosity, and this particular foreigner might have passed with ordinary remark had he not discovered an inquisitive curiosity as to the house of Mr. Marsters, and its surroundings, and its inmates. At once the shrewd and timorous souls of the village concluded that burglary was his object, and communicated their fears to Mr. Marsters. That gentleman was skeptical; but when, upon inquiry, he found that the stranger had ingratiated himself into the favor of his coachman, and was particularly inquisitive as to the countess, he did suspect that the Russian was a spy of Prince Kroupiève.

Mr. Marsters informed Mr. Harlowe of his suspicions, to the disturbance of the latter. Both were loath to believe that the prince would dare establish a system of espionage in so small a village and thinly populated a neighborhood, where the doings of one were the concern of all, yet they concluded that, as a matter of safety and precaution, the countess should remain for a time under the roof of Mr. Marsters, where she would have adequate protection. But while they thus sought the interests of the countess, they persuaded themselves that the presence of the



stranger was a mere coincidence, and had no relation to the designs of the prince.

It did not occur to anyone to consult James Dale, who, from his previous intimacy, naturally might be supposed to know those who served the prince. Had they done so, Dale would doubtless have promptly confirmed their suspicions that the man was in Northport by command of the prince, but would have allayed their fears by the opinion which he expressed subsequently, when it was of no value, that it had no more significance than was involved in an effort to keep the whereabouts of the countess in knowledge.

But if Mr. Marsters and Mr. Harlowe doubted, the countess did not, and insisted that her Italian servant, Pietro, who had remained in New York, should be summoned. When that faithful domestic did arrive, he promptly recognized in the stranger one of the two men whom he had so cleverly outwitted on the day of the landing of the countess in New York.

The fact of the espionage having been conclusively established, Mr. Marsters insisted upon the continued residence of the countess beneath his roof. Against this the lady contended, in the fear that if Mr. Marsters were to show such open friendship for her, he would, to his own injury, be brought into collision with the prince's power for evil. Though Mr. Marsters rejected such possi-



bility with contempt, insisting that the prince's power would avail nothing in America, and that he was too intelligent a man not to know that resort to violence would be quickly followed by punishment, notwithstanding his high position in Russia, it was difficult to persuade the countess to the contrary, so great was her awe of the man. It was not until the urgency of Mr. Marsters was supplemented by the advice of Mr. Harlowe as her counsel—advice tantamount to command—that she yielded.

Mr. Marsters, however, much as he pooh-poohed the spy, boiled over with indignation at the discovery that an espionage on his house had been established. Without consulting either Mr. Harlowe or the countess, he declared war upon the prince. Returning with Pietro to New York, he went to the hotel where the prince stopped, and demanded admission to his presence.

The prince, however, had left town, but Rodion Michaelovitch was there; and on reading the card of Mr. Marsters, he thought the call of the lawyer might have reference to the business which had occasioned the visit of the prince to Edgemere, so he presented himself, to the disappointment of Marsters.

“It was the Prince Kroupiève I called to see,” said the lawyer aggressively, in answer to the polite greeting of Rodion.



The confidant of the prince informed Mr. Marsters that his master had left town for a few days, but that to a degree he, Michaelovitch, was his representative, and that perhaps the business of the lawyer might come within the matters upon which he was empowered to act for the prince.

“Well,” said Mr. Marsters, “my first business with the prince was to express to his face my opinion of his contemptible act in putting a spy on my house and the inmates of my family.”

Rodion was horrified, and made a protest with his hands, but Mr. Marsters, not heeding the gesture, went on:

“I wanted to tell him that he might be a Russian nobleman and a man of distinction in his own country, but that here he had been guilty of a practice that showed he was not a gentleman, but very near to a scoundrel.”

Rodion could not stand that; he went to the defense of his master, and with no little haughtiness and arrogance.

“Sir!” he cried, “do you know of whom it is you use this language?”

“I know very well who he is,” replied Mr. Marsters hotly.

“The prince knows, too, how to resent the language of insult,” said Rodion.

“D—— your impudence, and his, too!” cried



the lawyer. "Your prince has insulted me, and if he doesn't make an apology I'll show him that I know how to resent an insult, too, and in accordance with the rules of the very highest civilization. I'll horsewhip him."

Rodion nearly fainted.

"What!" he gasped; "horsewhip the representative of the Czar of all the Russias?"

"I don't know what he's the representative of, nor do I care," retorted Marsters. "I don't care for him any more than I do for your Czar and all the Russias. And you tell your prince that if he doesn't take off his spy within twenty-four hours, he'll be seized, horsewhipped, tarred and feathered, and ridden on a rail. We don't stand such things in this country."

"Your Government at Washington will permit that?" asked the astounded Russian.

"Our Government at Washington has got nothing to do with it," replied Mr. Marsters. "It's a State affair. But I won't submit to it. The Countess Naletoff will be my guest until next October, and I won't have her freedom interfered with by your prince, nor your Czar, nor all your Russias."

With this Mr. Marsters walked out of the hotel, leaving Rodion Michaelovitch in possession of the very information to secure which the spy had been sent to Northport.



Inasmuch as the spy was promptly withdrawn, Mr. Marsters greatly plumed himself on his direct method of dealing with Prince Kroupiève, and which resulted in the freedom of the countess to go and come, and ride about the country unannoyed by an agent of her countryman, an opinion in which he was confirmed by Mr. Harlowe, with many an admiring slap on the back. Dale, however, was of the opinion that Mr. Marsters' threats had nothing whatever to do with the withdrawal, but that such retirement was due to the declaration of Mr. Marsters that the countess would remain as his guest at his country seat until he resumed his city residence in October.

In the meantime Mr. Harlowe was very busy. Shortly after his first interview with the countess he had gone to Washington in an endeavor to discover the precise terms of the treaty articles, so as to determine whether, in the event of consummation of the treaty, the lady really was in the danger she apprehended, and if so, in what manner.

After his first outburst of sympathy, and he had applied his vigorous mind to a calm consideration of the situation, he began to doubt whether the countess had not taken counsel rather of her fears than her judgment. It seemed to him folly to suppose that a great nation, in order to secure a single person, however great the desire of its ruler might be to secure that person, would engage in



a treaty with another great power for that single result.

But the countess easily swept away his doubts, and in doing so, showed such a high degree of intelligence and such a comprehensive grasp of the polity of Russia as to compel his respect and admiration.

The negotiations for a treaty with the United States, she said, had not been begun with the purpose of seizing her, but were owing, first to the policy of Russia to live with other nations as other nations did with each other, and, secondly, to the fact that, so long as no extradition treaty existed, America was a refuge for all sorts of offenders Russia desired to punish, and who could from here continue their intrigues against the Government. While it was true that few countries were willing to bind themselves in solemn treaty to return political offenders, yet Russia had so ingeniously constructed its laws that all political offenders could be declared guilty of criminal offenses. And while it might be difficult to persuade an enlightened country to take a similar view of an offender, yet the possibility existing was enough to awe the Russian subjects into believing that, with the establishment of every new extradition treaty, another refuge was shut off against them. In this intention she, the countess, was of no more concern than hundreds of other Russians, scattered



over the world, who had fled their country with the consent of their Imperial Master.

Descending from Russia's general policy to a consideration of her own individual case, she said that the Emperor was embarrassed by feuds among the nobility, many of them of standing of generations. To end these feuds had been the effort of Alexander for many years, and the means generally employed was marriage between the families at feud. Such a feud had existed between the Naletoffs and the Kroupièves, two of the most powerful, as well as the wealthiest families of Russia, whose vast estates divided a province between them. To end this feud had been a favorite dream of the Emperor, and Kroupiève had been induced to it by visions of the power and distinction he would attain by the union proposed, in the accession of great wealth and the control of a great province which could itself raise up and equip an army by no means to be despised. She, the countess, had rebelled. Aside from the fact that, at the time the proposal was made, she was pledged to a young nobleman, a remote relative, she held the Prince Kroupiève in utter detestation, not alone because of her inherited enmity, but because of the cruelty of his nature and the open and flagrant immorality of his life.

But it was in vain, when Alexander urged the union of the two, that she presented these facts;



nor was she more successful in her effort to point out the unwisdom of permitting Kroupiève to attain such power, since, by leaguings with two or three other noblemen similarly placed, a combined power could be raised up sufficient to contest with the Emperor himself, when prudent policy would suggest the division and not the concentration of such power. But Alexander's answer to all her arguments had been the reply that the union was a high policy of state, and that it was her duty as a loyal and devoted subject to obey. Persecution following her obduracy she had fled the country, but not until she had turned all her available assets into money and jewels and sent them out of the country before her own departure, leaving her landed estates to the danger of confiscation.

In the fact that the act of confiscation had not been promulgated, she argued she saw danger to herself. She was convinced that such act had been held back through the influence of Kroupiève, who, in such an event, would lose them, since they would go to the crown, and who evidently hoped for her return to the Empire, when he could force the union.

That hope was involved in the extradition treaty pending; the presence of Prince Kroupiève in this country with vast imperial powers proved it to her. Perceiving the opportunity the negotiations for a treaty presented, Kroupiève had, she was certain,



obtained the consent of Alexander, and power from him to come hither in an endeavor to expedite the treaty, and while doing so to so guide the negotiations as to include a clause or provision so completely covering her case as would, when the treaty was an established fact, compel her delivery under demand. While she did not believe that the United States Government would lend itself knowingly to such an intrigue, she feared it would do so unwittingly by admitting such provision, innocent in its appearance, but constructed to fit into Russian law. It was to frustrate this subtle purpose that she had appealed to Mr. Harlowe.

Fully alive to the danger the countess apprehended, Mr. Harlowe, as was said previously, had visited Washington to obtain precise knowledge; but his journey had borne no fruit. The Secretary of State, through whom alone he could expect to gain the knowledge, was not at his post, but was enjoying at his home a well-earned vacation. But he was consoled in his disappointment in the assurance that no danger attended the delay, since, in the absence of the President and the head of the foreign office, little progress would be made in the negotiations.

So, returning to Edgemere, Mr. Harlowe devoted himself to an examination of the Russian law, the study of treaties, and the principles of international law underlying them, and to frequent



consultations with the countess while awaiting the return to duty of the high dignitaries of Government.

Meantime, life flowed smoothly at Edgemere; the firm of Harlowe & Marsters was not dissolved, and if Flossie missed Bentley, who had returned to New York, when the dissolution proceedings had been suspended, through the advent of the countess, she still had a most enjoyable companion in her father, with whom she bathed and boated, and sang and danced.



## CHAPTER II.

### LINES OF BATTLE.

IN the latter part of September of 1893 Mr. Harlowe was registered at the Arlington hotel in Washington, where he had made arrangements for a prolonged stay.

The machinery of government was working smoothly on full time and in full force. The heads of the Departments were again at their desks, and the President had returned from his summer home by the sea. As a consequence, the foreign ambassadors, with their *attachés*, were again in attendance; Washington was gay; and Prince Kroupiève's presence at the capital was known, but only because of his persistent attendance at the leading social functions.

On the first day of October, Mr. Harlowe was joined by his family, considerably augmented. Melinda and Flossie, of course, were of the family, and Dale also, and, much to the delight of Flossie, as well as of himself, Bentley, taken thither as an assistant to Mr. Harlowe, and also later, when a confidential messenger was deemed desirable, Joe.



But the conspicuous addition was that of the Countess Mura Naletoff.

Business of moment, touching the privileges accorded by the Government to a silver mine in Mexico, the owners of the right to mine which were clients of Messrs. Harlowe & Marsters, necessitated some months of residence in that country on the part of Mr. Marsters, and his sister was to accompany him for the benefit of her health. Thus the countess was deprived of the protection she had received under Mr. Marsters' roof, at the time when she most needed it. The result of the conferences between the two partners was that the lady was transferred to the care of Mr. Harlowe.

By the time it had become necessary to leave Edgemere, Melinda Harlowe, in a measure, had become reconciled to Dale's residence in the family; at least she tolerated him. It was with difficulty, however, that she could repress her anger when she found that Bentley was to join them at Washington. But this was nothing to what she felt when she learned that the Countess Naletoff, who was guilty of being undeniably charming, and in whose society Harlowe seemed to take such pleasure, was to become a member of her family circle.

Her first angry outburst was sternly silenced by Mr. Harlowe. Knowing only too well the limita-



tions of her trespass upon her brother's patience, she dared not protest again, or even show her dislike to the arrangement. But she sought consolation from her friend, Mrs. Melchor.

"It is unbearable and not to be tolerated," she had said to her friend on the day she was informed. "The whole tenor of our lives is overturned, all on account of this wretched foreign woman."

"She seems to be very amiable and agreeable," replied the other lady consolingly.

"That's her despicable cunning," sharply retorted the maiden lady. "She has imposed upon everybody but myself—even Flossie. I'm so tired of hearing about her. It is the countess does this, the countess says that, and the countess thinks the other. And Ellen Marsters must constantly sing her praises to me. She is so simple in her ways, says Ellen; so sweet, so unaffected, so easily pleased, so grateful for any attention. I'm sick of it all."

Mrs. Melchor thought that the testimony of the mistress of a house as to the good qualities of a guest was strong evidence, but she felt that an expression of her thought would only further irritate her visitor.

"Here we are," continued the irate Melinda, "compelled to leave Edgemere a month earlier than usual; deprived of our usual winter's residence in our comfortable city house, and forced to



live in an uncomfortable and dreary hotel, where I will not have occupation enough to employ my time, all because of my lady, the countess."

With the possibility looming up before her of seizing the opportunity to give her son Arthur a few weeks' residence at the capital, under excellent care and auspices, Mrs. Melchor thought the change in the life of her friend was not without its compensations, but what she said was that, in her enforced idleness, Melinda could resume her studies in religious literature, which had been interrupted by her increasing cares.

"And then," Melinda went on, not heeding the last bit of consolation her friend had offered, "and then there is the possibility of consequences too distressing to contemplate, all because Chester, in a weak moment of sympathy, permitted himself to be diverted from his intention of abandoning the practice of the law."

By this time Melinda had reached the point always dreaded by her friends, and toward which Mrs. Melchor had, with alarm, perceived she was tending—Melinda's ever present fear that designing women were laying siege to Chester's susceptible heart. That wise lady then hastened to turn the conversation to a subject in which Melinda had an equal interest, and which was very near to Mrs. Melchor's heart—the union between Flossie and Arthur.



If Mr. Harlowe would not permit Melinda to air her opinions, and if she did not dare to show her feeling to the countess, others, however, did not escape. Melinda had a grievance and was very happy in exploiting it where she dared. No woman is truly happy until she has a grievance. As it was, even after they reached Washington, Flossie and Dale were driven to long walks to escape its parade.

In other respects, however, the habits and labors of this strangely assorted family were adjusted to the necessities of the long siege Mr. Harlowe had undertaken with his customary ardor.

Once settled in Washington it was not long before Mr. Harlowe was fully informed as to the letter and scope of the treaty articles. Moreover, he was alarmed to learn that the negotiations had progressed to that stage whereat consummation was in sight. An examination of the situation—the reading of the articles in the light of his studies of the Russian law—showed him that the countess had not overrated her dangers, and also showed him that there were but two courses of procedure open to him. Either he must oppose the whole treaty and endeavor to defeat it, or he must concentrate his energies upon the clauses and provisions under which lay her danger.

If the treaty should be defeated, of course an untroubled residence in the States would be



insured to the countess; but even the most superficial consideration of that course showed how formidable such an undertaking would be, promising only failure as the end. There was, it was true, organized opposition to any treaty with Russia, but it was without weight or authority, for the reason that within its ranks were embraced all the socialists, anarchists, and refugees of the country, whose very contentions drove the conservatives to the other side of the question, apparently upon the principle that good could not come out of Nazareth, and that what these people contended for must be wrong, because such people contended for it. To espouse that side of the question then was to enroll himself in their ranks, with consequent weakness to himself.

On the other side, strongly advocating a treaty, were the internationalists and the judiciary of the country, the latter no inconsiderable influence, and for which Mr. Harlowe had a large professional respect.

But over all, and operating most powerfully, was a sentimental consideration, which made the treaty popular with the masses. The story had been authoritatively told, and was a part of the unwritten history of the country, that, at a certain period of the Civil War, when the Government, struggling for its very existence, was in a most critical situation, it was threatened with the disastrous inter-



ference of certain European powers—an interference which was averted not only by the friendly attitude of Russia, but by certain open and emphatic acts. Such was the gratitude of our nation then toward Russia that the curious spectacle was presented of the freest government on earth anxious to grant whatever was asked by the most absolute despotism under the sun. Extremes had met. And sentiment is much more difficult to combat and overcome than logic. The proposed treaty was popular. Mr. Harlowe abandoned opposition to it as a whole, as leading to the failure of the end he had in view.

He was therefore driven to the adoption of the other course—the endeavor to defeat or modify the peculiar clauses affecting the personal interests of the countess. He did not fail to recognize that, in taking such a course, his position before the Department was weakened in this, that he stood as an attorney for special interests—a narrow ground—and also that he would inevitably be brought into a hand-to-hand conflict with Prince Kroupriève, concealed though he might be in ambush behind the Russian Embassy; yet Mr. Harlowe, well and accurately informed, knew that the prince directed all movements, and that if the tongue was the tongue of the declared representative of the Emperor, the hand was the hand of Alexander's secret emissary.



With a courage only a strong man can summon Mr. Harlowe chose his course, and elected to stand to win or lose all on a single point, and in doing so, at a stroke he placed Prince Kroupiève at a decided disadvantage.

“It is a bold thing to do,” he said to the countess when, after full consideration, he laid his plans before that lady. “It is putting all our eggs into one basket. However, I not only believe it to be wise, but the only course promising success.”

“Is, then, our enterprise so difficult?” the lady had asked in alarm.

“I should be wrong were I to conceal from you the fact that our effort is surrounded with many difficulties,” he replied, “but by standing for that one thing, we must either obtain it or be wholly denied. There is a certain amount of strength in that position itself. So we will sweep away all considerations as to whether or not the clause providing for the yielding up of criminals guilty of an attempt against the life of the head of either government, or being accessory thereto, on demand of extradition, is based on correct principles. For our purposes we will concede that it is.

“But consider,” protested the countess, “what in Russia may be determined to be an attempt on the life of the Czar—the most innocent action when the authorities care to make it so.”



She was loath to let go what seemed to her to be the great moral question involved and which seemed so powerful when argued.

“Were I contending for all the unfortunate refugees of the Empire,” replied Mr. Harlowe, “I would make no concession of any kind. But I am seeking only to protect your interests—you as an individual. And in pursuit of that end I cast aside an argument which might be urged with force, that the disputed clauses, as they now stand, can be so construed as to make the Russian Criminal Code a part of the treaty.”

“You seem to me to cast aside all that is strong,” urged the countess.

“Yes; but I avoid an opposition which is offensive in high places,” replied Mr. Harlowe, “and stand strenuously upon a point which, gained, will absolutely insure your safety, and that is that the clauses shall not be retroactive.”

“Retroactive?” repeated the countess inquiringly.

“Perhaps,” said Mr. Harlowe, “the term is too technical for you. I mean that the phraseology of the clauses under which your extradition could possibly be demanded should be such that they can have no effect or bearing upon the past and shall apply only to the future. In other words the only offenses which shall constitute a basis for a demand of extradition shall be those commit-



ted subsequent to the date of the promulgation of the treaty."

"Promulgation?" she again inquired in her pretty accent. "Forgive me, for I am very stupid."

"The promulgation is the official term for the announcement that the treaty has gone into effect," Mr. Harlowe explained. "Now your extradition, if Russia after the promulgation of the treaty shall demand that the United States shall yield you up, must be based upon some alleged offense or crime. If I can carry my point so that these clauses of the treaty shall apply to offenses and crimes committed after the treaty has gone into effect, the demand for you must fall, since it can be proved that you have been a resident of the country from a period of time far antedating the close of negotiations for the treaty, and that all crimes you had committed, if any, must have been prior to that time."

The countess was evidently skeptical. Her face was clouded as she shook her head doubtfully.

"I have reason, practice, and principle to back me in my contention," continued Mr. Harlowe, "and what is quite as important, I will put Prince Kroupiève out of the argument."

The countess looked up quickly. This looked like contest. "How?" she asked.



“The point being conceded as a general principle, as I am sure it will be, and against which Prince Kroupiève cannot contend without uncovering the fact that he has a special and individual purpose that he is striving to serve, I will then endeavor to prove that the clauses in question, in their present phraseology, do admit a construction under which the commission of crime at a date prior to the promulgation can be set up. The prince, then, will be compelled either to admit the possibility of such construction, or to argue that the clauses are not retroactive, and cannot be so construed, and are not so intended. In either event he is at a disadvantage, for in the former event he defeats himself at once; and in the latter, he can hardly demand your extradition, for to do so he must set up a retroactive effect to cover any offense he may allege against you.”

The countess understood. The strategic side of Mr. Harlowe's proposition appealed to her, if its simplicity did not. And, understanding, she acquiesced and approved the plan of campaign of the lawyer. Thereupon Mr. Harlowe began operations.

Prince Kroupiève, in concealment, watched the development of Mr. Harlowe's plans, and quickly appreciated their dangerous (to him) nature. Moreover, he conceived a profound respect for the



strategic abilities of Mr. Harlowe, who, at a stroke, had placed him in a situation from which there were but two avenues of escape, one of which led to certain defeat and the other to a position which was untenable.



## CHAPTER III.

### DALE'S DISCOVERY.

MR. HARLOWE prosecuted vigorously the cause of the countess on the lines he had laid down to her; but, in doing so, his time was not so absorbed that he could not devote a portion of it to what he fondly called his great discovery.

His battle for the countess was one waged in the dark. He made his points, submitted his briefs, pushed his arguments orally when he could, but was not permitted to know the effects of his blows. One assurance he did receive before October was wasted, and that was that his point, that the treaty should not cover crimes and acts committed prior to the date of the treaty, was conceded. But how he progressed in his attack upon certain clauses of the treaty articles, that were susceptible of a retroactive construction, he could not learn, except vaguely. The guarded utterances of his friend, the Secretary; hints from the same source that a brief, meeting certain arguments of the opposition, would be accepted, gave him a little light from time to time. But the fact which gave him the best assurance that



his efforts had not been without their impression was, that experts in international law had been summoned to the aid of Government to consider some of his points. The suspense was naturally great, and perhaps, then, that is why he sought distraction in experiments designed to confirm the fanciful theory he had evolved.

Of these experiments he talked little. He had come to realize that his theories that the emotions and passions could be allayed or inflamed, diminished or intensified at will by the use of certain drugs, was regarded with sneers by some of his friends and acquaintances, scorn by others, and ridicule by all. Confident in his ultimate success, he was not diverted from his devotion to the theory. He knew quite well that his pursuit of it was regarded as an eccentricity, which affected the judgment of himself as a man of weight, authority, and ability. The reason for his proposed abandonment of the practice of the law was probably to be found in that knowledge, and in the belief that his standing as a lawyer would be impaired when it became generally known that he held views so opposed to established faith and belief.

He had become so accustomed to the ridicule of his immediate friends and the members of his family that he met reference to his "fad," as they called it, with humor himself, and from outside



of the ranks of such friends, with a keen suspicion of sarcastic intention, although he could be turned to an earnest discussion of it when encouragement was given him. Relying upon the affection his brother-in-law bore him, and his own habit of never considering anything from a serious standpoint, Dale, a licensed jester, was more given to ridicule of the "fad" than anyone else, and more frequently talked of it with Harlowe, seemingly serving his sense of humor in drawing his legal brother-in-law into defensive argument.

One day he assailed Harlowe with results that not only caused him much laughter, but gave him food for thought and incentive for observation. A month had passed since they had settled in Washington, and Dale, returned from a stroll, entered the apartment used as the general parlor of the Harlowe suite. Mr. Harlowe was seated at the table, on which rested the cabinet wherein he kept his vials and instruments related to his "fad." He was studying a paper intently, too much absorbed to heed the coming of Dale.

"Chester," he said, "I have a great scheme for you in that treaty matter."

The lawyer laid the paper he was studying from his hand, turning with attention to his brother-in-law.

"You know how intimate I am with the President?"



Mr. Harlowe nodded. Everyone knew it. It was the talk of the town, much given to gossip of distinguished people. Dale found an approach to the great man when others were denied. That a man who, so far as could be ascertained, had had no previous relations with the President, should, in the short space of a month, establish such relations with the ruling power, and especially one who seemed to bring no influence with him, was the wonder. The enemies of the chief magistrate said it was due only to that dignitary's capricious fondness for new faces; Prince Kroupiève thought it was due to the intrigues of Mr. Harlowe, who sought to establish a friend near the throne; but the Secretary of State told his friend Harlowe that it was mainly due to the fact that Dale had nothing to ask either for himself or his friends, and always brought a quaint story and a funny jest to the President, who hailed him as one to whom he could turn for relaxation from sterner duties. But, much to Dale's delight, it brought him much toadying in that city of toadyism, where all, after their degrees, are toadies.

"Well," said Dale, "I believe the real obstacle you have to overcome in your fight is the prejudice of the President in favor of the treaty articles, as they stood when you came down here, and set them all by the lugs with your doubts and questions."



"Yes?" exclaimed Mr. Harlowe inquiringly, thinking that, for the first time, he was about to reap some value from Dale's *entrée* to the White House, rising from his chair and going to Dale.

"Now, when you want it, I'll secure for you an uninterrupted interview with the President," continued Dale, "when you can hypnotize him with that stuff."

He pointed to the cabinet.

"Hypnotize!" exclaimed Harlowe, disgusted and disappointed at one and the same time.

"Yes," said Dale; "then you can pump into him a hatred of foreign countries and a love of his own."

"Do you think," cried Harlowe, "that I dabble in such an empirical notion as hypnotism?"

"Well, your own notions seem to have hypnotized you," retorted Dale. "If it was not your notion, then it was that paper you were poring over so intently."

"That paper," replied Harlowe, going to the table and taking it up, "that paper is probably the most valuable contribution to science since Harvey discovered the secret of the circulation of the blood. Harvey and Harlowe! Twin benefactors of the human race! Dale, it's a very remarkable coincidence, isn't it—the similarity of names, I mean? This paper is one the scientific world would rejoice to secure, even in its present



imperfect form. It is a simple list of drugs, but"—and he paused impressively—"opposite the name of each drug is the passion or emotion which is influenced by that drug, when injected into the circulatory system of the body. You see! Harvey discovered the circulation of the blood; Harlowe discovers that that circulation can carry influencing drugs to the brain. In such manner do great events hinge upon one another."

Dale was perplexed; what Mr. Harlowe had said was so plausible that he began to think that possibly there might be something in the idea that a perfect man might be temporarily produced. But his brother-in-law's "fad" had been too fruitful a subject for joking to be surrendered without a struggle.

"Well, old man," he said, "if you could only persuade the President to submit to inoculation, you might get him to agree to anything you wanted. Queer idea that, of squirting ideas into a fellow's brain with a syringe. If you could get at the rulers that way it would revolutionize diplomacy, wouldn't it? Instead of being a ready and adroit liar, the diplomatist would be fully equipped when he had a squirt-gun and a drug shop."

"I would be content," replied Harlowe, with a laugh over Dale's whimsical notion, "with something less than a President or a King for a sub-



ject. Finding subjects is my trouble. Now, Dale, last night I found that belladonna——”

“You want to experiment on me?” broke in Dale.

“You’d serve a purpose in one way,” said Mr. Harlowe sarcastically.

“Excuse me!” exclaimed Dale emphatically. “I’m somewhat solicitous as to my health.”

“Of necessity,” continued Mr. Harlowe, not heeding Dale, and going to the cabinet, “my experiment must be upon the man, nervous and mental. The possession of brains is a necessary requisite in a subject of mine.”

“And the very first requisite in escaping you,” retorted Dale, narrowly watching Mr. Harlowe take a bottle and syringe from his cabinet, and retiring to the other side of the room.

“Now,” Mr. Harlowe went on, following up Dale, vial and syringe in hand, “as I said before, last night I discovered that belladonna had an expansive influence, and I thought if you would——”

“Heavens, no!” shouted Dale, placing a table between himself and his brother-in-law. “I am not anxious to be expanded into an angel.”

“An angel!” exclaimed Mr. Harlowe. “Oh, I can’t undertake to do that with you—especially you; but I could expand that intellect of yours so that it would be of some use to you.”



"Keep away! Keep away!" cried Dale, lifting a chair and putting it on the table as a further protection against the designs of Harlowe.

"I see," said Harlowe, as he turned to restore the vial and syringe to the cabinet; "I must continue to be my own subject."

As he dropped into an easy-chair, he sighed:

"Everybody is dead to this science. No, no; not everybody! The countess is not. An astonishingly fine woman is the countess, Dale."

Dale, busy in replacing the chair on the floor, looked up with a smile.

"There's nothing eccentric about that remark," he said, and came from behind his barricade.

"Last night," went on Harlowe, "she listened for a full hour to my exposition of this science, and there was not a tremor of a smile—not a shade of incredulity on her lovely face."

Dale laughed, and asked:

"Did you experiment on her?"

"On her?" cried Harlowe, leaping to his feet, aghast at the idea. "I? Why, Dale, I don't know a single defect in her. She is a most remarkable woman—perfection, sir; perfection! Experiment on her, indeed! Insert a needle in those arms—so white, so plump, so round. Why, man! I couldn't! I couldn't touch them. If I were to do so, I'd be inoculated myself—inoculated with love and ecstasy."



Dale did not laugh. Perhaps Mr. Harlowe expected him to when, realizing the rhapsody into which he had been betrayed, he turned to look at his brother-in-law. But Dale was sitting astride a chair, his hands on its back, and his chin resting on his hands, keenly scrutinizing the lawyer. Could his thoughts have been put into words, they would have been something like this:

"Is Melinda right, after all? This looks like it. I thought it was only the vaporings of her jealousy. By George, it will be too bad if Chet is caught now, and with this high-born dame, for she'd never marry him—never. Oh, pshaw! He's too level-headed to be caught by her."

After a moment or two a question escaped from him, for he was hardly conscious of uttering it.

"Have you discovered a preventative against love?"

"Yes, sir!" promptly and firmly replied Harlowe. "Asafedita!"

"Asa——" But he could not repeat the whole word, for he went off into a wild burst of laughter.

"I'm inoculated with it now," continued Mr. Harlowe when he could get a word in. "Always am."

"You're right, by Jove!" cried Dale, breathless with laughter. "Sure preventative against the love of the other person."

"Laugh if you will," Harlowe went on, "but



that's the reason why that glorious creature makes no impression on me."

He suddenly changed from his earnest and sincere mood, and quizzically asked:

"You won't investigate with me, then, Dale?"

Dale shook his head, still convulsed with laughter.

"Oh, Dale!" said Mr. Harlowe, "I'm afraid you are not the stuff that benefactors are made of."

He left the room, and Dale, still sitting on the chair, became serious.

"By Jove! suppose the dear old fellow is caught, after all?" he said.



## CHAPTER IV.

### DOMESTIC ANXIETIES.

DALE'S laughter was hushed in his anxiety. His concern was for Harlowe, not for himself. With all his frivolity and lightness of nature, Dale was, nevertheless, a man of deep attachments. He gave to his brother-in-law an affection for which few of his acquaintances would have given him credit. And, if he ridiculed Harlowe's eccentricities he did respect his brother-in-law's great abilities and sterling qualities of heart. In this suspicion which had suddenly sprung up there was anxiety for Harlowe which was purely unselfish.

For years the jealousy which Melinda had shown of every marriageable woman coming within range of her brother had been a standing joke in the family. And so, when he had heard Melinda rail against the folly of bringing so fascinating a woman as the countess into their family circle, Dale had laughed, regarding it merely as an expression of Melinda's jealous apprehensions, perceiving no danger himself.

But now, if the suspicion were based in truth, what then? If Harlowe did really love the count-



ess, it was a love that never would be crowned. Harlowe had passed that age in himself when he could bring romance to work the witchery that made Titania see beauty and loveliness in Bottom. It were absurd to think for a moment that the countess could make return of love for that of this simple bachelor lawyer of middle age and republican training, whose wealth, large enough indeed for all his needs, yet was small compared with her riches—this Countess Mura Naletoff, with her grand manner, her wealth, her beauty, her lineage, her rank, her distinctions, her life in royal courts, and associations with the grand world. Even if her heart, evidently tender, were touched by her lawyer's devotion to her cause, she would, Dale was certain, regard a union with Harlowe as a humiliating *mésalliance*.

No; such a result was too wild to contemplate. So he was filled with apprehension as to what effect the growth of a passion for the countess and its inevitable denial would have on Harlowe. Far better than most of Harlowe's friends did Dale know the depth and strength of the lawyer's emotional nature, and he feared that the disappointment would be a blow from which the lawyer would never recover. It was these considerations which had hushed his laughter and made him so much more serious than was his usual mood.

But Dale was by nature an optimist. He



could not follow a gloomy trail long, and so soon found a cross track that led him to more hopeful conclusions, and finally brought himself to a belief more in line with his hopes and desires, and that was that he had been mistaken and had given too much importance to a gentleman's expression of his admiration for a fine woman.

Indeed, by the time Melinda entered the room, as she did a few moments later, Dale's serious mood was wholly dissipated.

Deny it as he might, Melinda was the one person who exercised a restraint upon Dale, and he made immediate concession to her presence by abandoning his straddle of the chair, in which undignified attitude she had found him. Replacing the chair he took his stand at the fireplace, with his back to the grate, though there was no fire in it.

Recognizing Dale with the barest inclination of her head, Melinda took her seat at a table on the opposite side of the room, and busied herself with some fancy work that she found on the table. Dale watched her without speaking for some moments, quite certain from the ominous frown on her face that before long she would air one, at least, of her many grievances.

"I am worried!" finally broke out Melinda.

"The old story," thought Dale; but aloud he asked:



"The countess?"

"The countess," promptly responded the lady, and then added snappishly: "and Flossie, too."

Dale looked up quickly and with apprehension, but it was not the apprehension of the parent of a child against whom complaint was to be made, but rather the apprehension of one who felt that his turn for condemnation would follow, since the playmate with whom he was so closely associated had fallen under the ban.

"It is with difficulty that I can keep her and that young Bentley apart. As it is, I don't wholly succeed."

Dale was relieved. There was no indication in Melinda's tone and manner that he was to be blamed either for the fact or for failing to assist; on the contrary, it was rather as if he had no concern in the matter, and that Melinda had made the remark simply because it was on her mind. Indeed, it was characteristic of the family that no one thought of Dale's responsibility as the parent of Flossie. Even in Dale's remark in reply there did not seem to be any recognition of it in himself.

"Oh," he said, very carelessly, "he seems to be a good fellow."

"Very trivial," positively asserted Melinda. "Entirely deficient in that steadiness which is so marked in Arthur Melchor."



Nothing could exceed the contempt in which Dale held Arthur Melchor, but he did not care to antagonize Melinda at this time in her fondness for the callow youth, and merely contented himself with holding up his hands in protestation when Melinda could not observe him.

“Why, James,” continued Melinda—turning a full face upon Dale, that he might see all the horror expressed upon it—“why, James, actually I found Bentley with Flossie at the piano yesterday, and he was teaching her a song about ‘The Bow-er-y.’”

One might have supposed from the tone of Dale that he sympathized with Melinda in this condemnation of the turpitude of Flossie and Bentley, had not his words given rise to the suspicion that his disgust was over the discovery that so ancient a ditty had been added to Flossie’s musical repertoire, for he exclaimed:

“What? That old chestnut!”

Melinda, paying less attention to the words than to the tone, added quickly and reassuringly:

“However, I can manage them.”

“The devil doubt you! I won’t,” remarked Dale in an undertone.

“My great trouble is the countess. Chester is so much under her influence. She is a designing woman, James—a very dangerous woman.”



Dale uneasily shifted his feet on the rug as he muttered:

“Because she is so charming.”

“She exercises all her arts upon Chester,” Melinda went on, severity and scorn creeping into her voice. “And he is *so* blind. She is interested in his scientific humbug. They spent the whole of last evening discussing the nonsense, until they set me to sleep, and I don’t know what wiles she practiced upon him.”

Dale with effort suppressed his desire to laugh.

“She reads to him,” continued Melinda, her scorn deepening, “and he says her accent lends new eloquence to poetry. She sings to him, and he says that her voice is the music of the heavenly spheres. She tells him tales of life in Russia, and he says he is learning history by the light of two lustrous orbs. Bah! I have no patience with him!”

She ended her recital so energetically that she snapped her knitting needles, and laid her work on the table.

Dale, intensely amused, and lost to everything but the humor of the moment, controlled himself sufficiently to remark very soberly, and with an emphasis of alarm:

“It *is* serious.”

“Serious and absurd,” said Melinda, leaning back in her chair and folding her arms.



"When a man takes to poetry at forty, the attack is severe."

"He says," said Melinda bitterly, "that she is his ideal of a woman."

"Men marry their ideals," said Dale, shaking his head lugubriously.

"I told him he was far from being her ideal of a man."

"Women love their ideals; they never marry them." Dale was determined, now that he had her, that Melinda should not escape him.

His efforts were rewarded by seeing Melinda leap from her chair, exasperated.

"I must do something to remove him from her evil influence," she exclaimed.

"You certainly ought to," said Dale, shaking his head.

"If this continues," cried poor Melinda, all her latent fears coming to the surface, under Dale's prodding, "she will marry Chester in spite of me."

Dale evidently thought he had carried his teasing of Melinda far enough, for now very soberly he said:

"No, Melinda, you are mistaken. The Countess Naletoff will never marry Chester."

"What do you mean?" asked Melinda sharply.

"I mean," replied Dale, "that the Countess Mura Naletoff will look for a more distinguished alliance than one with Chester K. Harlowe."



"Do you mean," asked Melinda indignantly, "that she considers herself too good for Chester?"

"Well," said Dale, laughing, "I presume that is the plain and blunt way of stating the fact. Her birth, education, and training lead her to believe that the world is divided into two classes—those who are noble and those who are not; to the first class she belongs and Harlowe does not, since he has no title as a handle to his name."

"And she despises Chester, then?" asked the downright Melinda.

"By no means," Dale hastened to say. "I do not doubt but that she respects him highly, esteems him as a friend, and would admit him to her confidence and friendship. But marry him—no, nor any other American, since he is not dignified, in her eyes, by a title."

Melinda was thoughtful but indignant. A moment before she had been angered at the thought that the countess would marry, or at least was striving to marry, her brother. Now, inconsistent as it appeared, she was outraged at the idea that this foreign guest of theirs would not.

"Well," she said, "Chester Harlowe is worthy of the best woman alive. He's too good for this countess."

"From my standpoint and from yours, yes," replied Dale tactfully.



"If you are right," suddenly asked Melinda, "why is she trying to make herself so agreeable to him? Is she trying to use him?"

"I should be slow to believe that," replied Dale. "Rather I would prefer to believe that she makes herself agreeable to Chester from the feminine instinct of finding pleasure in making herself agreeable to others."

"Humph!" was Melinda's brief comment.

"Dismiss all fears as to her designs," continued Dale. "There is a fear which to my mind is present, and a serious one."

Melinda looked up quickly and apprehensively.

"You mean Flossie?" she asked.

"No, I do not," replied Dale. "The effect on Chester, if he were to contract a passion for this very charming woman."

"Paugh!" exclaimed Melinda, "if he is so weak as to be deluded by a woman he ought to suffer. It is merely the punishment he deserves."

"In his case," said Dale, more thoughtfully than was his wont, "it will be a punishment that will last his whole life long."

Melinda did not reply. She seemed to be lost in thought for some time, and when she did speak it was to Dale's astonishment.

"I never heard you talk so sensibly, James Dale."

She paused; but her next words showed that



she was thinking not of Harlowe but of the countess.

"I am relieved—though I do doubt yet—by what you say, that the countess is merely playing with Chester."

"But I don't say that," said Dale. "I said quite the contrary."

At this moment Flossie entered the recess, from an outer door, bearing a sheet of music which she placed on the rack of the piano, and sat herself at the keyboard. Tom Bentley followed, and stood beside her. Both were apparently without knowledge that others were in the room, especially that Melinda was.

Flossie, after running over the notes, struck the keys. The sound issuing brought Melinda about almost with a jump. For a moment she could not speak, so astonished was she at the sight. Recovering, she drew herself up severely, and addressed Bentley.

"Mr. Bentley!"

The music ceased. Flossie and Bentley looked around, confused and blushing.

"Mr. Harlowe has gone to your room, Mr. Bentley," she said with all the severity she could command. "He expects to find you there."

Bentley came from the recess.

"Oh!" said the luckless Tom. "Is that so? Indeed? I'm—I didn't—I'll go to him now."



As he passed Dale, that philosophic gentleman said to him:

“Young man, circumspection is the price of liberty in this house.”

“Confound the lynx-eyed cat!” muttered Tom in his mortification, and he left the room.

“Flossie,” said Melinda to the girl, who had been watching Tom’s expulsion with suppressed merriment, “your father will be ready for his walk soon. Prepare yourself.”

“Yes, -aunt.”

Flossie went to the door leading to the inner apartment. At the door she turned.

“Dad!” she cried in a whisper, as by a gesture she attracted her father’s attention.

She executed a few dance steps, expressive of her disgust with her aunt, and vanished. Her father made an attempt to respond in the same way, but was brought up short, in an awkward position, by the sudden turning of Melinda. She stared at him.

“Are you in pain, James?” she asked.

Seizing upon her question as an excuse he admitted he was, and escaped.



## CHAPTER V.

### A RANDOM SHOT.

THERE was a lull in the treaty negotiations during the days immediately preceding the elections of November. If, thereby, Mr. Harlowe found more time for scientific investigation and to devote to attentions to his fascinating guest and client, his family also found time to realize to what extent curiosity had been excited as to the mysterious *grande dame* living in seclusion at the Arlington.

Under any circumstances the countess would have sought this seclusion, for she knew that Prince Kroupiève was in the capital, moving conspicuously in its society, and she dreaded to meet him so long as her affairs hung in the balance. But apart from her own feelings in this, Mr. Harlowe believed that their ends would be better served if she were to maintain at least a partial incognito. He felt that there was a certain weakness in his position; that the sole motive of his interference in the treaty matter was that of seeking the protection of a single individual. While he could not hope that that motive could be



wholly concealed, yet he thought it wise to take every precaution against its being set forth offensively and emphasized by a conspicuous presentation of the object of that motive. Hence he had advised not only avoidance of public places and social functions, but the temporary abandonment of her title. Thus it was that she was known at the hotel as Mme. Naletoff.

Dale had asked Harlowe if, by that device, he hoped to conceal her presence from Prince Kroupiève, and had received for answer the reply that he presumed that the prince was not only informed of the arrival of the countess in Washington but of her departure from Northport—a reply that gave Dale some uneasiness, since it might be implied therefrom that Dale was looked upon as the source of information. He sought consolation in conference with Flossie, who, after administering it, came to her uncle and upbraided him for supposing such infidelity upon the part of her father, to receive the comforting assurance that her uncle had not dreamed that such construction could be placed on his words.

Though the family maintained a strict reserve as to the identity of the countess, nevertheless, rumor and gossip were busy with her name and person. It leaked out that a lady of high rank, great beauty, and immense wealth—a Russian—was kept in mysterious seclusion in the hotel; and,



where knowledge failed to give the exact items of her history, invention stepped in to say that she was a noble lady, who had been involved in a deep and profound state intrigue, which had for its purpose the expulsion of Alexander from his throne. It was further asserted that her presence in Washington had relation to an intrigue as to the pending treaty.

Mr. Harlowe attributed the spread of these rumors and gossips to the machinations of Kroupiève, but made no movement to counteract them, lest a conflict of statement should cause the curiosity to swell higher.

But Dale, who had by his peculiar qualities quickly made himself welcome in all the grades and degrees of society, found himself questioned as to the mysterious lady, to the great test of his ingenuity. In his loyalty to his brother-in-law he pooh-poohed the mystery, laughed at the invented history, and affected to know nothing of the business of the lady in Washington, but was willing to expatiate at length on her beauty and accomplishments. Many efforts were made, through Dale, to draw the lady into the circle of society, but all were successfully resisted. The countess went nowhere.

But if the countess did not, Prince Kroupiève did. Few of the social festivities did he miss, and no one was more frequent in his calls upon the



ladies of high official station than he. And all the time he concealed his own participation in the game of diplomacy which was going forward. He was hailed as a devoted man of society, and even before the season opened in all of its brilliancy came into great vogue. But Dale, who met him frequently, and who had resumed at least pleasant relations with him, was under no delusions. He knew that the prince was playing his subtle game in this way, and, as well, fondly hoping sooner or later to meet the countess.

At the first reception of a Cabinet lady one day in early November, Prince Kroupiève overheard the ladies pressing Dale for information concerning the mysterious lady, and listened with his habitual sneer and amused smile to the ingenuity of Dale. Later, when opportunity offered, he said to Dale:

“My friend, you are very adroit.”

“You flatter me,” replied Dale, hoping the passage would end with the reply.

“The fair ladies,” the prince persisted, “do not apply to the proper person for information.”

“No,” replied Dale, accepting the inevitable. “They should apply to you.”

“Precisely! *I* have no obligations of interest or loyalty to the Harlowe to make *me* reticent.”

Dale did not fail to appreciate the veiled allusion to that passage in Northport when he had severed



relations with the prince, and he further knew that the astute diplomatist was well informed as to Mr. Harlowe's business at the capital at that time. So he saw no reason for the maintenance of a fiction with the prince, at least. Whereupon, and rather to the Russian's discomfiture, he crashed through all the subtleties with this reply:

"Very true, prince; but we all of us have restraining influences to reticence."

"Indeed! But you speak vaguely, dear friend; may I ask how?"

"Yes; you, for instance, dear prince, could inform these curious dames that the lady in question was the *Countess* Naletoff, and that she came from Russia, where she was one of the ladies of the Imperial Court, of high rank and great wealth—but you will not."

"And why?" replied the prince with a slight accession of hauteur. "Why should I not be free to talk of the lady and her business here?"

"Because," said Dale, striving to relieve his words of their weight by the lightness of his manner, "because it would reveal your intimacy with a matter you are at pains to conceal, and elicit a counter statement of your business in this country, and, as well, of certain past events in Russia, which you would not care to have related in the White House."

There was a momentary flash of anger in the



dark eyes of the Prince, for in the words of Dale, however lightly given, there was not only revelation of the knowledge of the one weakness of the prince's position, but of a threat to exert the power that knowledge gave, and Kroupiève knew the close relation of Dale to the President. But the diplomat rose and the man fell. With a laugh he said:

"This air of government is to you, my dear Dale, developing. That last remark was quite a stroke of diplomacy. But let us not get into misunderstandings of each other. Here is my hand. I have no other interest in the lady than that she is a countrywoman of whom I am proud."

They shook hands in apparent friendship. But neither had the slightest confidence in the other.

When Mr. Harlowe heard of this episode, which he promptly did, and from Dale, he applauded his brother-in-law for his readiness and declared it was a victory well won.

A train of events, however, issued from this meeting between the prince and Dale that the lawyer did not anticipate, nor could he have conjectured them. For one thing it brought out Prince Kroupiève from his cover.

Convinced that Dale's intimacy with the President was the result of profound diplomacy on the part of Mr. Harlowe, the prince gave to that intimacy a greater importance than the facts war-



ranted. Perhaps, in view of the relations of the various people, it is not surprising that the prince was led to think as he did. It is to be noted that in the affairs of this life there is a curious tendency toward averages, and that the profoundly able man is quite as likely to miss the truth by plunging too deeply for it, as his more simple brother who does not plunge deeply enough. The records of the diplomacy in which this Government has borne a part show that we have come away from the struggle with as many prizes as our antagonists have carried off; and this, in face of the fact that the diplomats of the Old World were those highly trained in the art and science of diplomacy, while ours have been precipitated into the conflict without training of any kind, and stronger in their ignorance than anything else. The simplicity which dealt most narrowly with the simple facts before them has sufficed to match the trained arts which took so broad a view and saw so many things that they lost the real points in their consideration of the scientific refinements they had conjured up.

So with Prince Kroupiève; in the language of our own philosopher, "He saw too many things that weren't so." The truth was that no one was more astonished than Mr. Harlowe when he learned that Dale had established such intimate relations with the President. It had at no time



entered into his mind to make use of Dale with the President. And there were several reasons why he should not have done so. In the first place, it was one of Dale's peculiarities that he invariably gained intimate relations with the chief person wherever he was, and that he gained nothing else; no one ever knew of a benefit, either to himself or to his friends, accruing from such relation, for if such an idea had entered his head, he would not have known how to set about its accomplishment; he knew, also, that Dale's friendship with the President was based wholly upon Dale's power to amuse the great man in the hours of his relaxation; and, chief reason of all, Harlowe knew only too well Dale's utter incompetency to carry forward a matter of moment, and his fatal perversity and propensity for taking the path that ended in defeat. While he had come off brilliantly in his skirmish with the prince, his achievement was the outcome of the inspiration of the moment; had it been suggested to him, the result would have been dire failure.

Kroupiève, however, taking the view that Dale's covert threat had been suggested by Mr. Harlowe, and was not a random shot that Dale had not dreamt of firing a second before the discharge, felt annoyed with himself for having offered the opening, and alarmed over his belief that the lawyer had effected a lodgment where it was to be



dreaded, in the White House itself. He set about an effort at counteraction, and, coming from under his cover, sought and secured an interview—unofficial, *sans cérémonie*—with the President, during the course of which he permitted that great dignitary to learn that he possessed vast and special powers from his Imperial Master, though he did not present them.

In this he gained an advantage over Mr. Harlowe the value and danger of which the lawyer was not slow to apprehend and measure. It is true he thought subsequently that it was to a degree counterbalanced by the greater confidence of the Secretary of the State, Williams, who seemed to see in this act of the President justification for greater freedom with Harlowe.

"I fear," said Mr. Harlowe to Bentley on the day he learned of this interview, "that this foreshadows a speedy consummation of these negotiations. I must surely invent something for delay."

"Consummation must be expected soon," replied Bentley. "The meeting of Congress is but a month away."

"Yes," said Harlowe, much troubled and pacing up and down the apartment with his quick, nervous tread. "Yes, only a month away, and I have not the slightest idea as to what effect my arguments have had."

"Your points as to the retroactive effect of the



clauses, as they stand in the articles, are before the Attorney General for an opinion," said Tom.

"Ah! We only suppose so."

"No," positively returned Tom. "I know so. I learned that from a friend of mine in the Department—close in his employment to the Attorney General."

"And the Attorney General is trending in which direction——"

"Ah! that I don't know. My friend would regard the telling of that as a betrayal of confidence."

"Well," said Harlowe, "if I could only learn the day that the Attorney General returns that opinion, I would put in another point for delay. I must keep the matter open until the latter part of this month of November."

Tom looked up inquiringly at Mr. Harlowe, hardly daring to ask for a confidence which Mr. Harlowe seemed to withhold.

"I am anxious," continued Mr. Harlowe, "that the Senator who is the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations should arrive in Washington before the negotiations are wholly closed. Naturally, once on the ground, he will be consulted as to the terms of the treaty, since the administration must rely upon him for the confirmation of it. I am well acquainted with him; we grew quite intimate in the conduct of a long



and important litigation a few years ago; we represented different interests on the same side. I am quite certain I can influence him to my way of thinking. But he will not reach Washington until the first of the month."

"Mr. Harlowe," asked Tom somewhat timidly, "suppose you should fail to carry your point in this matter before the treaty is sent to the Senate, what resource is left?"

"I mustn't fail," said Mr. Harlowe energetically. "I cannot fail. I must win. To have that treaty go to the Senate in its present shape means that we must undertake to defeat its confirmation. That is too formidable an undertaking. The treaty is popular, and I am afraid the Senate would not take a disputed construction of a clause as sufficient justification for defeating the whole treaty. No; I must not fail."

Working in the dark is most discouraging labor. Under the direction and guidance of Mr. Harlowe, Tom had worked hard, and as he could see no visible results of the industry of the two, it is feared that he had become rather hopeless.

Had Mr. Harlowe had an idea of the frame of mind in which the Prince Kroupiève had returned from his interview with the President, he would have plucked up hopes. The President apparently had conceded to Russia everything except the one point that Prince Kroupiève, more than Russia,



desired, and that evidently was still in doubt. He would have been also astounded at a resolution the prince had formed before he was driven from the gates of the White House—astounded, if not alarmed and bewildered.



## CHAPTER VI.

### A SURPRISING CHANGE.

PRINCE KROUPIÈVE did not expect to advance the matter of the disputed clause when he sought audience with the President. But he did hope to obtain a clearer idea of the trend of the Presidential mind than was shown in the notes which had been exchanged between the two powers.

It was understood that the visit of the prince was to have no official significance, but the intercourse of the two great men was marked by all the diplomatic reserve and courtesy of an ambassadorial ceremony. In common with his *confrères* of the trained school, the prince held the diplomatic skill of the representatives of the republic in small esteem, and had made certain that he had set himself an easy task. But when, at the close of the audience, he found that he was still left to surmise the Presidential trend of mind, his esteem was a little larger and his conceit a little smaller. The great chosen of the people had been quite as courtly and meaningless in phrase as he himself had been. However, from the President's reticence and evasion the prince drew the disturb-



ing conclusion that the matter in which he had a deep personal interest had not the tendency of direction he desired.

His resolution, therefore, taken upon his apprehensions rather than upon precise information, was that he would immediately institute the policy of delay. This would give him time to devise some means of combating the impression he was convinced Mr. Harlowe had made, and would also give him time to put into execution, and determine the effect thereof, of a plan he had conceived to accomplish his great desire outside of the treaty.

The first move in this plan, which was put into execution a week later, filled Mr. Harlowe with amazement by its audacity. Through the good offices of his friend, the Secretary of State, he had been informed of the delay in the treaty negotiations. As it was in the line of his desires, he sat himself down to wait patiently the developments.

On the day in question, when he was busy with his scientific researches, Dale burst in on him in great haste.

"Chester," he cried, "I quite forgot yesterday to deliver a message with which I was intrusted. The message was not to you, but I suppose it ought to be delivered through you. Prince Kroupiève desired me to announce that to-day he will wait upon the Countess Naletoff."



"The Prince Kroupiève!" exclaimed Mr. Harlowe, springing to his feet in amazement. "Kroupiève? Impossible!"

"Oh, no!" replied Dale, laughing at the surprise of his brother-in-law, "not impossible, however astounding it may be. He certainly did announce his intention of visiting the countess."

"Well," said Harlowe, "I like his impudence."

"No, you don't," said Dale. "You dislike it very much. I fear you are falling into bad tricks of speech, for the precise, dried-up, mummified old lawyer that you are."

Mr. Harlowe did not heed the chaff of his brother-in-law.

"Kroupiève!" he repeated. "Calls upon the Countess Naletoff!"

"If it will conduce to a clear understanding of the important communication of which I am the truthful bearer, I will repeat it once more," said Dale, enjoying Harlowe's amazement.

"Well," said Harlowe positively, "she must decline to see him."

"My sapient and astute brother-in-law, you are wrong," said Dale.

"Why?"

"Because Prince Kroupiève does nothing from impulse; he has a purpose in this; he is working some new scheme of which this call is a part. He cannot hurt the countess if she does receive



him, and he may discover to you, oh, follower of Lycurgus and Galen, something of that scheme."

Harlowe looked up at Dale with a smile.

"Out of the mouth of a babe comes wisdom," he said.

"Not correctly quoted," said Dale, "but it will pass, since I am credited with wisdom. The message delivered, I'm off. There is to be a Cabinet meeting this morning, and some of that wisdom, heretofore undiscovered by you, may be required on state affairs."

He went off with a light laugh, leaving Harlowe absorbed in thought.

"I presume I must inform the countess," he said at length, arousing himself to cross the room to touch the bell.

"Hang his audacity!" he exclaimed to himself as he turned from the bell. "His cold-bloodedness is too much for my civilization. I suppose he will come here with his gentle, suave, elegant manner, just as if he had not hounded all her relatives into the grave or Siberia and driven her out of her country! And the countess? I suppose that if she does receive him, it will be with a polite self-possession and command, repressing all feeling. That's the training of their grand world."

The hotel servant entered in response to the bell.

"My compliments to Mme. Naletoff," in-



structed Mr. Harlowe, "and say to her that I have just been informed that Prince Kroupiève will wait upon her this morning."

The servant left the room. The lawyer shook his head gravely, and said aloud:

"Duplicity and politeness; they have the same meaning in this century's dictionary."

During the episode which had ended with his message to the countess, he had held in his hand the paper he was busy with when Dale entered. It now attracted his attention. He tried to renew his interest in it.

"I am tending in the right direction, I am sure," he said to himself. "But it is a vast subject, though it is embraced in two questions: What parts of the physical body are affected by the various emotions and passions, and how? What drugs affect the various parts of the physical body, and how? The answers are complex, but, once obtained, my conception is realized."

He went back to the cabinet and laid it out of his hand.

"Ah, countess!" he said, "the day is not far distant when you will be proud to recall that Harlowe, the great scientist, was once your counsel—proud to know that he was ready to lay at your feet——"

He stopped short and turned from the cabinet with a gesture of impatient disgust.



“Ah! it is a dream—a wild, absurd, impracticable dream. How could I interest a young, lovely, high-born lady!”

He threw himself into an easy-chair and fell into a reverie, from which he was aroused by the hurried entrance of the countess.

“What is this message you did send me, dear Mr. Harlowe?” she asked, evidently much troubled.

Mr. Harlowe rose hastily and offered her a chair.

“The Prince Kroupiève dares to call upon me?” she continued, too much excited to heed the proffer.

“That is his announcement, made to Dale,” he replied.

“I will not receive him,” said the countess, seating herself, and looking up at the lawyer as if expecting approval of her determination.

“That was my own first impulsive thought,” replied Mr. Harlowe, “but I owe to Dale the suggestion that such a course would be unwise.”

“And why?”

“Prince Kroupiève, Dale says, is a man who never moves from impulse——”

“Very true.”

“And therefore, in waiting upon you, he has some purpose to serve.”

“Unquestionably.”



"Therefore, that purpose must be a part of some new scheme he is putting into execution."

"I will not disbelieve it; but, if so, what then? Why should I see him?"

"Because, to be informed of his plans or schemes is to be prepared to foil them. He may in his conversation, or in unfolding the purpose of his call, reveal at least a suggestion of his plan."

"Ah!"

The countess was silent, knitting her brows into a bewitching frown.

"You do not like the idea of meeting him?" asked Mr. Harlowe.

"I do not, my friend," said the countess earnestly. "The man is associated with three years of horror."

"Evidently he has changed his tactics," said Mr. Harlowe guardedly. "From pressing the negotiations to a close, he has turned to delaying them. Why? His call might reveal that."

"I will meet him," said the countess. "He can do me no harm here."

"Then will you permit me to offer some suggestions?" asked the lawyer.

"Give me instructions," the countess replied, smiling upon the lawyer trustingly.

"Be very guarded in all you say to him. Commit yourself to nothing. If he asks as to information of your plans, give him none. If he asks you



to do anything, temporize. On no account sign anything, however insignificant in appearance. Promise nothing; admit nothing. Induce him to talk; heed everything he says; recollect all, that you may repeat it to me."

"Repeat it to you? Will you not be present?"

"Not if we are to learn anything. If the plan is to prevent him from doing or saying anything, I will remain."

The countess shuddered, but merely replied:

"Very well."

At this moment a servant entered, bearing a card, and saying:

"For the Countess Naletoff."

Mr. Harlowe rose hastily, and, taking the card, handed it to the countess.

"It is he," said he. "Go now and prepare to meet him. I will receive him, and detain, or entertain him, as you will, until you return."

The countess, her face stern and pale, left the room. Mr. Harlowe told the servant to show the prince up.

"Now for my first open battle with the wily Russ," he said.

The prince was shown into the apartment in a few moments, elegant, composed, and distinguished. The two had never met before. Mr. Harlowe advanced politely to meet the visitor.

"Mistare Harlowe, I presume?" said the prince.



The lawyer bowed in acquiescence, and asked the prince to be seated. If the diplomat was annoyed or disappointed in being greeted by Mr. Harlowe rather than by the lady to whom he had sent his card, he did not betray it. He seated himself with the remark, ingratiatingly made:

“It pleases me much to meet the distinguished Mr. Harlowe.”

“I am honored, prince,” replied the lawyer, and was about to seat himself, when he realized that the visitor had taken a seat near a table covered with papers relating to his efforts against the treaty, and he noted that the prince swept them all with a comprehensive glance.

He went to the table in some haste and gathered the papers up, not failing to notice the amused and sarcastic smile of the prince as he watched.

“I have been using my parlor for an office,” he said in excuse, as he carried the papers to his cabinet.

“And for a study, if all I hear is true.”

Mr. Harlowe turned a look of surprised inquiry upon the prince, who answered it in words:

“I am told that you have made one great discovery in medicine.”

The lawyer, surprised, was keenly suspicious, but the Russian's face showed only interest in the remark he made, and the lawyer again learned how well informed he was on all matters, however



slightly bearing on the subject he had in hand. Mr. Harlowe replied gravely:

“No, prince; not medicine; perhaps chemistry—yes.”

“Ah!” replied the prince courteously. “It is not the same. But the discovery is of great value, I am informed. It will make the name of Harlowe still more celebrated.”

Alas! Poor, weak human nature! The strong man, attacked on his weak point, was found vulnerable.

“I will not be guilty of false modesty, prince,” he said, “and deny its great value. Its influence, when generally understood, will be very great. You perceive that the weaknesses of mankind lead to its disasters, and——”

“Is it a recent discovery?” interrupted the prince, willing to flatter Mr. Harlowe, but unwilling to be bored by a description.

“Quite recent,” replied Mr. Harlowe, fairly launched. “As I was saying, the weaknesses of mankind lead to its disasters; the emotions and passions are the cause of a great part of such disasters, and——”

“Do you devote much time to its study?” again politely interrupted the prince.

“As much as I can spare from—ahem!—other matters,” he replied:

To himself he said:



"I wish I could get him interested."

"Prince," he said aloud, "I should like to explain this great science."

"I should be delighted," replied the other, "but I fear it is too great a subject for the brief time now at my command."

"It is not abstruse," urged Mr. Harlowe, and then, as an idea occurred to him, he exclaimed in an under breath:

"Phew! Blue vitriol prevents lying. The prince is a liar. If I could, I'd make him tell the truth in spite of himself."

He went to the cabinet, and, filling a syringe from a vial of blue vitriol, he came back.

"It is the principle of inoculation by drugs. By a simple experiment upon you I would explain the whole science."

The prince leaped to his feet, actually frightened. A man who is calm before a pistol quakes at the sight of the scalpel.

"On me!" he cried. "You puncture me wiz zat! Pardon! I am not the rabbit for the doctaire to kill."

He muttered under his breath:

"The lawyaire is a madman."

Harlowe, with a disappointed air, returned the syringe to the cabinet, remarking inaudibly that it was very difficult to obtain a subject, but to the prince he said with a smile:



"I fear, prince, science, or, at least, this science, is not attractive to you. However, meta! more attractive will soon appear. I have sent your card to the Countess Naletoff."

The prince bowed and said:

"You are very amiable to the countess. Russia, in the person of its humble representative, thanks you for your courtesy to its distinguished ornament."

There was more than the suggestion of a sneer, of hidden sarcasm, and Mr. Harlowe did not fail to catch its tone, but he answered as if he had perceived neither.

"The countess is a charming woman. She confers pleasure when she permits the attention."

"The court, however," continued the prince, "deplores her long absence. I was but recently informed, Mr. Harlowe, that the lady was living under your protection."

The falsehood emphasized the sneer that crept out, in spite of the effort to conceal it, and Mr. Harlowe, seeing his opportunity, promptly seized it.

"Pardon me, prince. That was a somewhat awkward phrase, if you will permit me to suggest. It is open to a sinister construction. The countess is the guest of Miss Harlowe and myself."

"Pardon!" replied the prince with great self-possession; "it was the awkwardness of the for-



eigner, not entirely in command of the language he attempts."

"So I supposed," said Mr. Harlowe dryly.

"And," continued the prince, "I have wondered how the intimacy——"

"Friendship, prince," interrupted Harlowe.

"Thank you—friendship began."

"Through Mr. Marsters," briefly answered the lawyer.

"Ah!" said the Russian, "it is a charming man—Mr. Marsters."

"Yes," replied Mr. Harlowe, keenly suspicious. "Mr. Marsters will be delighted with your high opinion."

It was now the prince's turn to be suspicious.

"Does the eccentric fool make game of me?" he muttered to himself, but, concealing an air of annoyance, he went on easily:

"I did have the honor of the acquaintance of the countess in Russia. Our families were not intimate, for some quarrel of generations ago did divide them. So foolish! I have none but the highest regard for the lady. Indeed, I have taken steps to bring about a closer relation."

"Yes," thought Mr. Harlowe. "Persecution, banishment, assassination, murder—a few little things like that."

"But," continued the prince, "the lady has made a great mistake. I fear her estates are con-



fiscate. She did leave Russia without the consent of her Imperial Master."

"And is the Czar's consent necessary before a subject can leave Russia?" asked Mr. Harlowe.

The prince shrugged his shoulders and replied:

"The position of high rank carries with it obligations. Russia is jealous of her nobles. She requires them to be in attendance upon the Emperor. To absent one's self without permission is as if an officer of the army did depart without leave."

"To a simple American citizen," said Mr. Harlowe, "who knows nothing of royal courts or the obligations of rank, the restrictions on the individual seem hard."

"You have not an august master who demands attention," briefly explained the prince.

"August master!" exclaimed Mr. Harlowe. "Why, prince, we have more august masters in this country than you can count. We are all august masters. Therein lies our freedom. But to see the real august master of America, you should go to our larger cities. There you will find him in the fullness of his power. He does everything for us. He appoints our public servants, names our police, makes our laws, fixes our tax rates, which he graciously permits us to pay, selects the candidates for us to vote for—he is the august master of America. We call him a political



boss, and we kick him into the air about every so often."

Kroupiève laughed heartily.

"You are facetious," he said. "You——"

But his remark was interrupted by the entrance of the countess.



## CHAPTER VII.

### VERBAL FENCE.

BOTH rose as the lady made her appearance. The prince, with great deference and grand manner, advanced, bowed low before her, and, extending his hand, escorted her to a seat.

Mr. Harlowe with conflicting emotions watched the exchange of courtesies, conscious of a feeling of jealousy, which he condemned as he appreciated it, and of an irritation which, absurdly enough, went out to the countess rather than to the prince, noting withal, and with pride, her superb self-possession and nobility of bearing. There seemed to be almost regal condescension in the manner of her salutation of the prince. In truth, the countess was much more at home with this product of the civilization in which she had been trained than with the plain people with whom she had latterly been living, and who, notwithstanding her deep respect for them, sometimes confused her by their very directness and simplicity.

The lawyer, noting all this, retired to the door leading to an adjoining apartment.



Bowing the countess into her chair, the prince said:

"The pleasure of meeting the countess again is not mitigated by finding her upon foreign soil."

"A pleasure the prince has been slow to avail himself of," replied the countess.

At the door Mr. Harlowe shrugged his shoulders and addressed the prince:

"Prince, your pardon!"

The Russian nobleman, scrupulously observant of minor etiquette, rose and bowed.

"Countess!" said Mr. Harlowe, bowing and retiring through the door.

"My knowledge of madame's presence in Washington is recent," said the prince, turning again to the countess.

The lady looked upon him with a queer, incredulous smile. She knew it was unblushingly untrue, and that not a movement of her own for three months had been unknown to him. But she replied indifferently:

"Others of my compatriots have been as slow in learning of my presence."

Kroupiève lifted his eyebrows in polite inquiry, and the lady answered:

"*Attachés* of the Embassy."

"Can madame wonder at that?" asked the prince, now boldly dropping the fiction.



“I do wonder,” replied the lady. “There are many here whom I have met at St. Petersburg.”

“Surely,” remarked the prince, with an excellent affectation of solicitous interest, “you must understand your position here.”

“Oh, yes; I am the guest of an American gentleman.”

“Did not madame leave Russia contrary to the instructions of her Imperial Master?”

The countess hesitated in her reply, and cast a side glance at the prince to catch his intent look. Then, very coolly and with no little arrogance, she answered:

“You are misinformed, prince.”

The reply, evidently, was not what he expected, for he paused for a moment or two. Then he said:

“Ah! The Embassy has received such instructions from St. Petersburg.”

That the countess thought might or might not be true, but she had no doubt that, were the purpose of the prince to be served by it, such instructions had been lodged with the Ambassador. Such consideration inspired her reply, made with accentuated indifference:

“Yes, I presume so. I have a friend in Russia—or he may not be there now—who works my disadvantage where possible.”

Kroupiève covertly scrutinized the countess.



"I have begged the Ambassador," he said gently, "to delay action until I could confer with madame."

The countess was frightened; there were unknown terrors in the word.

"Action?" she repeated, plainly discovering her alarm.

The prince deftly concealed the smile of triumph that sprang to his lips on his discovery that he had penetrated her indifference, and almost humbly said:

"I am madame's sincere friend—more, would she but believe."

"Then it is to your wish to serve me that I may attribute your call." She had recovered her self-possession.

"Madame judges me correctly."

"Your words are strange in the light of history," laughed the countess tauntingly. "A Kroupiève tenders service to a Naletoff."

"Ah, madame! Time composes differences. The world moves. Neither you nor I can tell how that quarrel arose. I would let those differences be buried with the past, and tender the hand of friendship and service. Nay," he added impressively, "were I permitted, a Kroupiève would tender more to a Naletoff."

The countess veiled an involuntary shudder in her laughing reply.



"Ah, prince! Less than a generation ago such a remark would not have been made by a Kroupiève, and if made would have been accepted only as an insult by a Naletoff."

"Madame does not take me seriously," replied Kroupiève, flushing slightly under the contempt of her last words. "Yet her words prove the truth of my assertion. The world moves; we are wiser."

"No," replied the lady, looking him steadily in the eyes, with a smile strangely at variance with her tone and words. "No; they prove that all the males of my tribe are in Siberia, dead or imprisoned."

"Madame has been most unfortunate," he said sympathetically.

Stung by his hypocrisy, the countess was at no pains to conceal her sneer.

"Oh! I am certain I can rely on your sympathy."

Kroupiève rose and bowed with respect and humility.

"Madame only does me justice."

The hollow mockery of this fencing was too much for the woman. She rose to her feet impulsively.

"Justice!" she cried. "Pray, do not use that word. It is not familiar to the tongue of a Russian."



The prince was quite as much irritated, but he was under better control.

“Madame is bitter,” he said, continuing warningly. “I beg you will remember that I am attached to the person of the Emperor—that she will not say anything to her prejudice that I am compelled to report.”

“Ah!”

She had stung him at last. There was a note of triumph in her exclamation as she appreciated the opening he had unwittingly offered.

“Then—then am I to look upon Prince Kroupiève as a”—she stopped and added significantly—“other than as a friend?”

The prince was momentarily confused. He could have bitten out his tongue for his unguarded speech, and did not require the pronunciation of the word to know that she meant “spy.” But his recovery was adroit.

“By no means,” he said calmly, and with great dignity. “But as I am sworn in loyalty and truthfulness to the Emperor, I ask that I may not be placed in a position where I must prevaricate.”

Despite her disappointment that he had so readily evaded the position into which she had tried to force him, she could not but admire the adroitness with which he had escaped her.

She returned to her seat.



“ Ah! ” she said. “ It is the Russian nobleman who speaks. ”

“ And the humble admirer of the Countess Naletoff, ” he replied politely, even tenderly, “ who would, if acceptable, offer advice. ”

The countess was guarded at all points; the Greek was bearing gifts. But she asked indifferently:

“ And that advice is? ”

Kroupiève went to her chair and bent over her.

“ That you return to Russia immediately, and precede your return with a notification of your voluntary action. ”

The purpose was out; the intent of the call was plain. The countess looked up smilingly and shrewdly into his face.

“ You are solicitous, prince, ” she said.

The prince stepped back and bowed profoundly.

“ For your welfare, always, madame. ”

Nothing could exceed her haughty arrogance as, languidly moving her fan, she replied:

“ Yes; I have already experienced that solicitude. ”

It was her tone as well as her words that angered Kroupiève. He bit his lips in his efforts to suppress his angry reply, and when he did speak it was in a stern, loud, and threatening tone, which reached the ears of Mr. Harlowe in the adjoining apartment.



"Believe me, madame, to return would be far the wiser course."

"I had an enemy in Russia, who made my life there a burden," replied the countess sternly, delighting in the anger she had excited.

"An enemy can make your life a burden here."

Mr. Harlowe appeared at the door in time to hear the reply, so tauntingly made.

"Prince, the road to Siberia is very long from America. I remain in this country."

Kroupiève threw off all reserve.

"Voluntary is far better than compulsory return," he said angrily.

"Hold there!" cried Mr. Harlowe, striding firmly into the room. "No legal power can compel the countess to return. If you threaten abduction——"

The countess started to her feet in alarm.

Kroupiève stepped back.

"Threaten?" he repeated angrily.

"I warn you," continued Mr. Harlowe, "that here justice promptly follows outrage upon a woman."

"You misapprehend my words wholly," said the prince, shaking with anger.

"I am glad I do," replied Mr. Harlowe sternly. "But the warning stands."

"And with it you will give an apology for your singular address to me," sneered the prince.



“Not a single apology,” replied Mr. Harlowe, in a tone and manner that showed he meant what he said. “My address and attitude are justified by your own forfeiture of consideration, when you descend to threaten a woman sheltered by my roof.”

“I threatened!” sardonically laughed the prince. “The barbarian does not understand the use of his own language.”

“The barbarian,” returned Mr. Harlowe, not one whit discomposed, “understands how to sweep aside polite fiction and diplomatic phrase, and go straight to your purpose and intention, undeterred by your sneers and arrogance.”

The prince stared at the lawyer an instant, then going to the table took from it his hat and cane, and thence to the door, at which he turned and addressed the countess sneeringly:

“Madame the countess is to be congratulated upon the protection under which she is living. Its knightliness, however, must be strange and surprising to one of her refinement.”

“It is,” promptly replied the countess, “in that it compels my respect and esteem, just as its chivalry must be beyond the comprehension of the one known as the flower of Alexander’s court.”

“Ah! It shall be tested and its real quality discovered.”

The prince, with a bow to the countess which



pointedly ignored Mr. Harlowe, walked through the door with great deliberation.

The Countess Naletoff turned to Mr. Harlowe with beaming eyes that told their gratitude and admiration, her face suffused with a slight blush. She went to him, laying her hand in his:

"In my defense," she said tenderly and in trembling accents, "you have made a powerful enemy."

"I hope so, countess," he replied. "He was your enemy before he became mine."



## CHAPTER VIII.

### A MEMORABLE DAY.

DAYS passed and there were no demonstrations from Prince Kroupiève. From his visit to the countess Mr. Harlowe concluded that the Russian diplomat, foreseeing defeat in the matter he was personally interested in, had endeavored to frighten the countess into a return to Russia, and in this belief rested content.

As the 1st of December approached, however, several things occurred to disturb Mr. Harlowe from this comfortable assurance. From the Secretary of State he learned that no determination had been reached upon the points which he had raised on the disputed clauses; and from Dale that the prince, after his first audience with the President, had become a frequent caller at the White House, where he was made welcome; in short, that the President had taken an unaccountable, yet characteristic, fancy to the Russian.

This alarmed Mr. Harlowe, and he would have been still more disturbed and bewildered could he have known that he was the object of an intrigue upon the part of the prince—bewildered because



it would have appeared as if Kroupiève was actuated by motives of friendliness and was advancing Harlowe's ambition. Of this intrigue, however, the lawyer had not even suspicion, but the information he received from the Secretary, led him to address himself to ingenious and energetic efforts at further delay, and he besought the Secretary to receive further briefs on points hitherto untouched by him. Whether the delay which ensued was due to his efforts or not, certain it is that Congress assembled on the first Monday in December, and the treaty articles were not transmitted to the Senate.

But there came a day in which matters moved with astonishing rapidity—a day forever after memorable in the minds of all concerned.

On the morning of this day—it was in early December—Tom Bentley entered the general parlor, where the countess had received the prince, searching for Mr. Harlowe. That morning, also, Mr. Marsters had arrived in Washington, fresh from his return from Mexico, and Mr. Harlowe had carried his partner to his own room for a consultation on what he believed to be his final and most important move in the game which he had been playing for four months.

Not finding Mr. Harlowe, Tom sat down to look over the papers which he carried.

“Surely,” he said aloud, “Mr. Harlowe can only



mean this brief for delay. It is very weak; besides I do not believe he wants to say what he has said. I have made no mistake; it is just what his notes say. Well, I won't take the risk of sending it to the State Department until I have referred it to him."

While he was poring over the paper Flossie entered the room. She came forward a step or two eagerly, but checked herself, frowned slightly, and went to the piano in the recess, where she struck a note or two.

Tom Bentley jumped up, and, seeing Flossie, bowed gallantly.

"Good-morning, Mr. Bentley," said Flossie coldly.

"*Mister* Bentley," exclaimed Tom, surprised at her coldness and resenting it. "Good-morning, *Miss* Dale. You are very formal this morning."

"Not any more than you were last night at the reception," replied Flossie, with a badly executed attempt at indifference. "I believe you did bow to me once last night."

"Ah! did I?" returned Tom, pleased to find the young lady displeased. "I am surprised I could do even that."

"Yes," very spitefully. "Your politeness is surprising."

"You were so engrossed with your distin-



guished admirer, Prince Kroupiève, that plain people could not get near you."

"Oh, Tom!" cried Flossie, forgetting her grievance in her new interest, "do you know, the prince asked me such a funny question last night. He wanted to know how I would like to live abroad."

"I don't see anything funny in that," commented the jealous Tom.

"Well, strange—singular, then. Don't be pokey, like Aunt Melinda."

"Nor strange either; unless, indeed, he proposes to make you the Princess Kroupiève. That would be strange."

"And very pleasant," replied Flossie, tossing her head pettishly. "But no such good luck. You know his heart is lost to the countess."

"What he calls his heart," said Tom, still refusing to be placated.

"Well, he said, the prince did, that a little bird had told him that uncle would soon go abroad for a long stay."

"Pshaw!" contemptuously said Tom. "He was giving you a jolly. What does he know? Was that all he told you?"

"All he told me," replied Flossie, somewhat nettled that her communication was received with such contempt. "He asked me lots of funny questions. Whether the countess had not a



great attraction for uncle. I laughed in his face—outright—and told him that if she had Aunt Melinda would bundle her out of the house quickly enough.”

Tom made no reply, but contemplated the toe ends of his boots. He was, indeed, thinking that the prince, for a great dignitary, had been at very undignified work in attempting to pump an unsophisticated member of Mr. Harlowe's family. But Flossie misapprehended his silence.

“Was it because the prince was so attentive to me,” she asked, “that you are in such a temper this morning?”

Tom started. “Temper!” he exclaimed. “No; it is because that donkey, Melchor, has come here.”

Mrs. Melchor had accomplished her desire, and secured an invitation for her son to visit the Harlowe family for a week.

“Arty!” exclaimed Flossie, laughing heartily; but suddenly she changed her mood and added, with an assumption of great dignity, “Mr. Melchor is here as our guest.”

“Flossie,” said Tom earnestly and beseechingly, “I really believe you encourage that fool to hang about you.”

“Mr. Bentley,” returned that young lady severely, “you are not respectful,” and watching Tom narrowly from the corner of her eyes, added:



"Mr. Melchor is an admirable young man—of good habits and very moral."

Tom made an impatient gesture of vexed disgust.

"There!" she exclaimed, "don't get into a temper again. It's not becoming."

She went to a table, and, busying herself with the papers on it, slyly watched her lover.

"Flossie Dale!" cried Tom, "you are most perverse and tantalizing."

"Oh, thank you! You are improving in your compliments."

"You never gave me an opportunity to speak to you last night, and yet you know I went to that reception only because of you——"

Flossie interrupted him.

"And Miss Williams."

Tom gave a low, soft whistle. Here was the cause of Flossie's peculiar treatment of him.

"Of course," continued Flossie sarcastically, "the daughter of the Secretary of State—an official young lady—can make people forget—older friends."

Tom, highly pleased to find that jealousy possessed the young lady, twirled his mustache and replied in a tone of the utmost self-conceit:

"Oh, yes! Miss Williams! Yes! charming girl! Had to be nice to her. Her father bears an



important relation to the case we're engaged upon. Policy demanded that I show her some attention—to the family, in fact."

"Tom Bentley, you're a fool!" snapped out Flossie, as she flung herself into the recess and down at the piano, on which she began to pound discordantly.

Tom executed a few dance steps behind her back in the exuberance of his satisfaction and then going to the piano, leaned against it, looking down upon her. Flossie ignored him.

"That's pretty," he finally said approvingly.

Flossie tossed her head resentfully, pounding even more vigorously and discordantly.

"You'll knock spots out of Paderewski, if you keep that up," said Tom.

Flossie could contain herself no longer, for, with a crash, she burst into laughter.

"You're too absurd to be angry with," she cried.

"And you," said Tom, putting his arm tenderly about her, "are too bewitching to be anything but in love with."

What might have followed was interrupted by the entrance of Mr. Harlowe and Mr. Marsters. The two stole quietly out of the recess and left the room.

"It is the final move—the important point,"



said Mr. Harlowe to Mr. Marsters. "I did not want to send it until I consulted you. Have I made that draft clear and explicit?"

Mr. Marsters sat down and attentively read the paper he held in his hand.

"Your point is," he said at length, "that unless the crime alleged has been committed after the date of the promulgation of this treaty, the person so charged shall not be liable to extradition."

"That's it exactly," replied Mr. Harlowe. "It is claimed by those in opposition that the effect of the present clause is precisely the same. But I fear that, after the treaty is made, a contrary construction will be offered. Now I propose to ask that this form be substituted for the clause now in the articles. Then there can be no doubt."

"Yes," said Mr. Marsters. "Your language is clear and explicit. It is susceptible of but one meaning. And it completely covers the case of the countess."

"Of course," replied Mr. Harlowe, "that is my purpose. But I cannot urge that as a reason. I present it on the basis of an approved principle."

"And you fear the influence of Prince Kroupiève on the President?" asked Mr. Marsters.

"I fear that he has already persuaded the President that the present phraseology is not retroactive."

"On what, specifically, do you base your fear?"



“On nothing but my dread of the man. Oh, a wily fellow is that prince—keen, shrewd, able, and penetrative, he is a man to be feared. I tell you, Marsters, this has been a great game of diplomacy. But whatever I do must be done now. The treaty is popular; the Senate will confirm it promptly, just as it leaves the President’s hands.”

“You have delayed this point too long, haven’t you?”

“No; I wanted the assistance of the Senator who is Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations of the Senate. They would not transmit it until he was consulted. He did not reach Washington until the day of the assembling of Congress. I have seen him and presented my arguments. He wants a brief in favor of the points I raised.”

“But what assurance have you that the treaty may not be transmitted this very day?”

“The new point I have played to-day.”

“But that is very weak?”

“It will serve the purpose.”

“Hum! How does the countess take this contest?”

“Excellently!” said Mr. Harlowe with increased animation. “Oh, excellently! Lovely woman, Marsters! Perfectly lovely!”

Mr. Marsters turned a shrewd, scrutinizing glance upon his partner, and smiled grimly.



“Does Melinda share your opinion?” he asked.

“Ahem! Well — ah” — hesitated Harlowe, slightly embarrassed—“I fear Melinda fails to appreciate the countess. Very singular! Now, Marsters, don’t you think it is very singular that a woman like Melinda should be so opposed to a woman like the countess?”

“Yes,” very grimly replied Marsters, “it *is* singular.”

At this moment Joe entered the room, bearing a letter.

“Letter for you, Misser Harlowe,” he said.

“Haven’t you gone to the State Department yet?” he asked as he took the letter, tearing off the envelope.

“Oh, dey aint no hurry,” replied Joe indifferently.

Mr. Harlowe looked down at the boy, whose impudence was a perennial source of amusement to him, and said:

“Oh, there isn’t? Well, will you pardon me if I disagree with you?”

“Misser Bentley aint got de paper ready yit,” said Joe as he went toward the door, muttering: “Dey tink I aint got nuttin’ t’ do but t’ hustle.”

By this time Mr. Harlowe was engrossed in his letter:

“Ah!” he exclaimed, “a note from the Secretary of State.”



“ ‘The President,’ ” he read, “ ‘has sent for all the papers in the treaty matter, and has granted an interview to Prince Kroupiève for this afternoon——’ ”

“ This is ominous, Marsters,” he commented. Resuming, he read:

“ ‘Should you have additional points to file, do so at once, as, in all probability, this is your last chance. Yours, etc., Williams.’ ”

“ This is a friendly act of Williams,” he said, evidently much disturbed.

“ Have you seen much of him since you have been here? ” asked Marsters.

“ In the beginning, yes. But since my business here became known, I have thought it wise to avoid comment by seeing little of him.”

“ Has anything been said,” asked Marsters hesitatingly, “ about a foreign appointment for you? ”

“ No,” said Harlowe shortly and turning away as if he desired no further talk concerning it.

Marsters watched him silently a moment before speaking.

“ Well, Harlowe,” he said at length, “ you should put that last point of yours in without delay. But those last two briefs you filed with the Secretary should not, in my opinion, go to the President.”

“ Hey? ” Harlowe turned shortly to Marsters. “ Why? ”



“Well, intended for delay only, and on a point easily combated—they will tend to weaken your whole case before the President—especially if Kroupiève is to be there. Better withdraw those last two briefs.”

“You’re right!” exclaimed Harlowe. “I will withdraw them at once.”

Dale was heard whistling and humming in the adjoining apartment.

“There’s Dale!” said Mr. Harlowe. “Just the very one to send to the State Department. Knows Williams well. Darn that fellow, Marsters! I never saw his like. He and the President are as thick as two thieves. He amuses the President and asks no favors. The only sure basis of friendship with the great!”

“Good-morning, the firm of Harlowe & Marsters,” cried Dale, entering.

“Are you going out this morning, Dale?” asked Harlowe.

“To call on my friend, the President,” answered Dale, bowing in acquiescence. “I see by the papers that the Chief Justice has resigned. The President will need my advice, and I shall recommend—myself.”

Harlowe and Marsters laughed and exclaimed together: “You?”

“Why not?” asked Dale with well-simulated surprise. “I have yet to discover that a knowl-



edge of law is requisite for a judicial place. The chief qualifications are, a distinguished demeanor, the power to look wise, and a superb confidence in your own opinions."

"Which you certainly do have," said Harlowe.

"All of which I possess to an eminent degree," continued Dale. "Sorry, Harlowe, I cannot recommend you, but duty demands that I advance my own fortunes."

"Well, before you do so," inquired Harlowe, "will you go to the Secretary of State for me?"

"In the meantime," replied Dale with great complaisance, "before I assume the ermine, I will fasten the wings of Mercury on my heels and do your bidding."

He crossed the room to the cabinet.

Marsters hurried to Harlowe.

"Can you trust him?" he asked. "You know he was with Kroupiève."

"He is as true as steel to me," replied Harlowe. "Now Marsters, write that brief for me—the brief for the Chairman of Foreign Relations. I will take it to him this morning, before he goes to the Senate."

"Yes, I will write it," said Marsters, going to the chair where he had laid his hat and coat; "but first I must go to the President, on the business that brought me to Washington."



“Hurry, then,” urged Harlowe, “for I will need it soon, though this letter of Williams shows we need fear nothing to-day.”

Mr. Marsters left the room and Mr. Harlowe addressed Dale.

“Dale,” he said, “I want you to get from the Secretary of State certain briefs and points I have filed against the proposed treaty with Russia. I want to withdraw them all.”

Unobserved by either Melinda entered, stopping at the door as Dale, surprised, turned to his brother-in-law.

“A sudden resolution, isn’t it?” he asked, misapprehending the remark.

“Rather,” replied Harlowe indifferently. “But done after consultation with Marsters. He approves of it. I will write a letter to the Secretary for you to take. When you are ready to go, come to Bentley’s room.”

Mr. Harlowe left the apartment without observing his sister.

“You hear that, James?” asked Melinda, coming forward.

Dale turned with a start, supposing himself to be alone.

“Particularly what, Melinda?” he asked.

“Chester has withdrawn his opposition to the treaty.”

Dale gave a start of surprise.



“Certainly!” he cried. “Certainly! that is what he means to do.”

“Oh, what a relief!” exclaimed Melinda. “My hope now is that Chester, having withdrawn his opposition to that treaty, it will be closed and the countess will go her way. Can’t you do something to hasten it?”

“Which?” asked Dale. “The going of the countess, or the making of the treaty.”

“Both!” replied Melinda. “But I mean the treaty.”

“That’s an idea!” muttered Dale to himself. “If I could, I would please Melinda and Kroupiève without opposing Harlowe. I could try.”

Flossie entered the room, very indignant, followed by Arthur Melchor.

“I will not have you talk so,” she was saying to Arthur. “It’s disrespectful and—and—mean.”

“Flossie!” commanded Melinda severely.

“I don’t care. I won’t have it!” persisted Flossie. “He’s saying disrespectful things of dear old dad.”

“Mother says so,” contended Arthur in his vacuous way. “So they can’t be disrespectful.”

“Your mother!” exclaimed Flossie most contemptuously.

“Mother says,” said Arthur, directly to Dale, “that since Flossie is to be my wife she must be



surrounded by a respectable atmosphere, and I must not let her associate with you."

"With me?" cried Dale, startled out of his self-command. "Her father? Why——"

He started forward as if about to inflict chastisement on the tactless youth, but recovered his self-command instantly. With great contempt he said to Melinda:

"Keep that cub out of my sight, and take the notion out of his head that Flossie will ever be his wife."

He went out of the room hurriedly, leaving Melinda to try to repair the damage the witless youth had inflicted upon her most cherished scheme.



## CHAPTER IX.

### MR. HARLOWE'S SACRIFICE.

AN hour after he had dispatched Dale to the Secretary of State Mr. Harlowe was detailing to the Countess Naletoff, in the general parlor, the final moves in his plan, and preparing that lady's mind for a result—whether that result was to be as they desired or the contrary.

While the two were thus engaged Mr. Marsters, closely followed by Tom Bentley, burst into the room, his face aglow with importance and satisfaction. So excited, and indeed enthusiastic did he appear, something never known of Marsters before, that Mr. Harlowe's first wild thought was that his partner had been drinking.

So he hastily rose, crossing the room, leaving the countess on the other side astounded at the interruption.

"Mr. Ambassador, I salute you!" cried Marsters, grasping Mr. Harlowe by the hand.

"My congratulations, Mr. Harlowe," said Bentley, quite as much pleased, though not so demonstrative.

Mr. Harlowe stared from one to the other and finally said:



"You are very gracious, but permit me to remark that it is a bad practice to begin drinking before dinner."

"The President empowers me to ask," said Mr. Marsters, big with the importance of the announcement, "if you will accept the Berlin mission."

Harlowe staggered back, overcome by the abrupt announcement.

The countess arose in excitement, intently regarding the group.

"There are subjects, Marsters," said Harlowe after a slight pause, agitated and very serious, "that are unseemly to jest upon. This is one."

"Believe me, Harlowe," cried Marsters earnestly, "it is true. When I had finished the business I went to him about, the President told me that your appointment as Minister to Germany had been determined upon, and he empowered me to announce it to you."

He again warmly extended his hand to Harlowe who, however, seemed unable to realize the meaning of the communication. The countess, clasping her hands in delight, moved nearer to Harlowe.

"To me?" cried Harlowe, finally grasping the sense of the honor, and, joyfully, "the Berlin mission!"

"You!" repeated Marsters. "There is no mis-



take. And if you accept, as you will, you are to make it known at once."

Gravely he added:

"This is a great honor, Harlowe, a very great honor to the firm of Harlowe & Marsters. I am very happy over it.

"It is a great honor," replied Harlowe, deeply moved—"far greater than I ever hoped to attain. The fulfillment of an ambition long cherished."

"Come!" cried Marsters, trying to satisfy his excitement by action. "Come! Acknowledge the offer at once, and announce your attendance upon the President, to accept and thank him for the distinction."

Mr. Harlowe, who was displaying almost childish delight in the honor which had fallen upon him so unexpectedly, moved toward the table to comply with the suggestion of his delighted partner.

As he did so the Countess Naletoff came to him with extended arms and radiant face. On seeing her Mr. Harlowe stopped abruptly. Pain and consternation were on his face. They were too marked not to seize the attention of the lady, and she checked her approach, embarrassed. But Mr. Harlowe quickly recovered himself, and with a beaming smile advanced to meet her, and she, seeing the strange expression on his face, which had checked her, cleared away, came forward to him.



“I am very happy,” she said, giving him her hand, “that so great a distinction is yours. On no one worthier could it have been conferred. The great respect I have for you here,” and she laid her disengaged hand upon her heart, “it makes me very proud to know is possessed by your President. Accept, my dear, dear friend, my loving felicitations.”

She warmly and tenderly pressed Mr. Harlowe's hand, and not a little to his disturbance. But he replied to her, and with greater dignity than he was used to assume:

“I fear, countess, notwithstanding your kind thought, that I am not worthy so high an honor. And though it is with great pride that I receive its proffer, yet it is nothing to that which I feel in the knowledge that honor to me gives you joy. But I shall—pardon me!”

He withdrew his hand from hers, bowed with great courtliness to her, and crossed to the side of the room where Bentley was standing, observing the scene with great interest.

“Mr. Bentley,” said Mr. Harlowe, “will you take my dictation?”

“Certainly!” said Tom, “with great pleasure.”

He seated himself at the table and arranged writing materials before him, ready to set down Mr. Harlowe's words.

“I presume,” said Mr. Harlowe, addressing



Marsters, "that I must send my letter to the President?"

"To the President," said Mr. Marsters with joyful anticipation.

Mr. Harlowe turned to Bentley and began:

"To the President:

"Mr. Marsters has just informed me of the great honor you contemplate bestowing upon me—an honor so far in excess of my deserts. To hold so high an office and to represent so distinguished an administration as yours at the Court of the German Empire appeals strongly to the highest ambition.

"Accept, Your Excellency, my most profound gratitude.

"Great as the honor is, I am so circumstanced that I must decline it."

The conclusion was so unexpected—so contrary to what all in the room had supposed, that for a moment no one spoke; even Bentley did not write the last words of dictation.

"Oh, no!" exclaimed the countess, the first to speak.

"What do you mean?" finally blurted out Marsters.

While Bentley, wheeling about in his chair, asked, as if he had not heard aright:



“Decline?”

To all of this Harlowe silently and composedly bowed.

“Oh, you must not do that!” cried out the countess in earnest and anxious protest.

“Why, man!” said Marsters, coming forward to Harlowe in angry protest. “Your great ambition! Decline; why you are mad!”

Harlowe merely said to Bentley:

“Complete the letter, please.”

Marsters and the countess looked to each other for an explanation of this singular action, as Tom sorrowfully appended the disappointing words.

Then Mr. Harlowe went to the table, took from it a pen, and dipping it in the ink, said:

“Give me the letter, Mr. Bentley.”

Tom laid the letter before Mr. Harlowe, who leaned over it and signed it. He threw the pen back on the table, and turned with a smile which had in it even satisfaction.

The countess, narrowly watching him, saw the smile, and, deeply agitated, fell back to the table at which she had been sitting, evidently making a great struggle with herself.

To Bentley Mr. Harlowe said:

“Will you see that that letter is sent to the President immediately?”

“But, Harlowe——” said Marsters.



"Immediately!" said Mr. Harlowe firmly and impressively.

"I will take it myself," said Tom sadly.

But as he arose Marsters put his hand upon him, detaining him, while he turned to Harlowe.

"Oh, Harlowe, why do you do this?"

In a low tone, so as not to be heard by the countess, he received his answer.

"I cannot be a representative of the Department and an attorney before it at one and the same time. Duty—honor—if not something stronger, bind me to the countess."

In a louder voice he said:

"Go draw that brief for the Senator, Marsters. Time is going."

"But, Harlowe"—began Marsters again, unwilling to permit the sacrifice as he regarded it.

"I am right," said his partner. Then dropping his voice again, he added, "Can you tell me that it is not an intrigue of Kroupiève's to get me out of this case and to abandon the countess?"

The intuition of Mr. Harlowe had reached a fact. The intrigues of Prince Kroupiève had brought about what Williams, the Secretary of State, had been vainly endeavoring to do for a year—brought it about, too, in a manner to leave Williams under the impression that it was solely his own doings.

Mr. Marsters abandoned further protest, but



with plain indications of his deep disappointment. Bentley, willing to delay the instructions of Mr. Harlowe as long as there was any hope of their countermanding, now saw all hope was gone, and sadly left the room with the letter.

Marsters looked to the countess, who was standing at the other side of the room, her face partly turned from them.

“Such a sacrifice!” he said, “and for a woman!”

Dejectedly he left the apartment. As the door closed the countess turned and saw that she was alone with Mr. Harlowe. With an impulsive gesture, she swept across the room.

“My dear friend,” she said, laying her hands upon his, her voice choked with emotion. “Why did you decline the Berlin mission?”

Harlowe was confused by the strength of her emotion.

“I—did——” By an effort he regained control of himself. “Circumstances which I would not change, could I control them, forced me.”

“Was it because of me?” demanded the lady most warmly and earnestly—“of my troubles?”

“Ah, madame!” he replied gallantly and rather airily, “did no other reason exist, that would be sufficient.”

This reply only confirmed her fears and deepened her agitation; seeing which, Mr. Harlowe went on:

“Countess! man is perverse. What we most



ardently desire, loses its value when attained. A residence abroad has lost its attraction for me."

She looked at him ardently, as if, apparently, she would compel the truth to show in his eyes.

"Ha!" she cried impulsively, "you are not frank!"

She laid a hand caressingly on his arm and again looked him in the eyes, deep emotion shining in her own. Under her ardent gaze he quailed perceptibly.

"Oh, noble, generous man!" she exclaimed after a long pause. "You do me a wrong. It is not right to compel me to such gratitude. Recall that letter."

"Do you a *wrong*?" said he, pain in his accent. "I do *you* a wrong—I?"

"Oh!" fairly sobbed the countess, "what are the honeyed accents whispered in the ear compared to such devotion!"

She stepped back, saying almost fiercely:

"It is a wrong—a wrong to me."

"Why, countess," now alarmed by the excess of her emotion. "It is—surely you exaggerate a simple thing."

"Simple thing?" cried the countess. "Is it a simple thing to sacrifice the ambition of a life?"

"Oh, no, no!" protested Harlowe. "Do not think so. *You* wrong *me* in such a view."

The countess made a gesture repelling that idea,



which had in it such abandonment that he feared she would be overcome by the violence of her emotion.

"Compose yourself, dear madame!" he pleaded. "Surely you are making more of a simple act than it deserves."

He led her toward the door of the inner apartment.

"I am sure," he said, "when you come to regard this coolly, you will see there was no other course to pursue."

She stopped at the door and turned upon him a look of intense gratitude.

"Your goodness does humble me," she said. "I will resist no longer, my whole trust is in you—my life, my happiness, all is in your hands."

Again she took his hand, pressing it warmly.

"I give you my heart's gratitude."

Harlowe bowed over her hand, lifted it to his lips, and kissed it.

She passed into the other room; he stood silent for some time, looking after her. Then he came back into the room, and leaning on the back of an easy-chair, lost himself in profound thought. At length he spoke:

"Her heart's gratitude, her life, her happiness!"

He sighed.

"Ah! If I could but believe—bah! what a fool



I am! The mere expression of a sweet, emotional woman's gratitude."

He straightened himself up and said:

"It is well I am inoculated with my preventative of love."

And by this time the letter—the rare and unusual letter—declining a distinguished ambassadorial appointment was exciting Presidential astonishment and informing Prince Kroupiève that Mr. Harlowe's chivalry had stood the test, and that its quality was high and rare.



## CHAPTER X.

### AN AWFUL BLUNDER.

THE meditations of Mr. Harlowe were rudely broken in upon by the noisy entrance of Joe, who, for the second time, was bearing a letter.

“Another letter from the Secretary of State,” he said loudly; so loudly, indeed, that his words reached the ears of the countess in an adjoining apartment.

“Ha!” ejaculated Mr. Harlowe, arousing himself to take the letter. “About the appointment, I presume.”

As he tore off the envelope, Joe, in the tone of one who had a grievance which must be righted, asked:

“Say, Misser Harlowe, what am I?”

“A bright, but very impudent lad,” promptly answered Harlowe, opening the letter.

“I’m your messenger, aint I?” asked the lad aggressively and argumentatively, not at all deterred by his employer’s characterization of himself.

“Well, yes,” reluctantly admitted the lawyer,



and then hastened to add qualifyingly, "when you are not engaged in your favorite occupation of meddling in other people's business."

Rejecting the qualifying addition and holding fast to the affirmative admission, Joe asked the question he had been leading up to:

"Den wot's Misser Dale runnin' fur papers fur?"

Mr. Harlowe looked down upon the bold, complaining eyes of the lad, intensely amused; the satirical smile playing on his lips relieved by the kindly light in his own eyes.

"Oh, the pride of position!" he exclaimed. "It is of all ranks and degrees. This lad is as jealous of his prerogatives as a Senator of his privileges."

Laying his hand kindly upon the head of the boy, he said:

"Joe, Mr. Dale is deposed from his usurpations. Now go."

He addressed himself to his letter, as Joe went away muttering triumphantly to himself:

"Dey aint no wheels in dis head, if it does belong to a boy."

Mr. Harlowe read the first sentence of the letter with a start and repeated it aloud.

"Your conversion in the treaty matter is sudden. That of Saul was nothing to it. But I attribute the reason thereof to a certain appointment of



which long before this you have had knowledge, and upon which I sincerely congratulate you.' ”

The lawyer let his hand holding the letter drop, as he asked in astonishment:

“What can Williams mean? Sudden conversion? From what? To what? He is dealing in riddles. Congratulations upon my appointment! Ha! ha! And I have put it away—the absorbing ambition of my life. Oh, what a helpless thing man is—the sport of circumstance! He builds, he hopes, he strives, and chance buffets him to a higher or lower plain. Ah, well!”

He sighed and lifted his letter to conclude its reading.

“‘I therefore permitted our mutual friend Dale,’ ” he went on reading, “‘to withdraw all your papers, and I gave him authority to use my name with the President.’ ”

“Authority to use his name!” exclaimed the puzzled reader. “Now what is Dale up to? It can’t be—it can’t be possible. Oh, this is too good!”

He laughed heartily and long.

“Of all the tomfooleries Dale has been guilty of, this exceeds them; and he has hoaxed so great a man as Williams into believing that he is a candidate for the Chief Justiceship. I declare that man Dale will go to Turkey some day and pluck the beard of the Prophet.”



“ ‘ Since he left me I have had misgivings.’ ”

“ Well, I should think you would, Williams, my friend,” he commented.

“ ‘ Hence this letter,’ ” he read again: “ ‘ I confer with the President this afternoon on the treaty, and I make no doubt, since you have changed your position, that it will shortly go to the Senate.’ ”

He dropped his hands in a panic. Then he hastily read the letter again.

“ ‘ Withdraw all the papers! Changed my position!’ For Heaven’s sake, what does he mean? ”

The countess entered the room.

“ I heard that you have received a letter from the Secretary of State,” she said. “ I hope it is that they refuse to accept your declination.”

“ No, countess,” replied Mr. Harlowe; “ it is a letter from the Secretary, but not about the appointment. It, however, fills me with apprehension—a dread of something, but of what I do not know.”

“ That letter you have received? ” she asked, partaking of his alarm. Evidently they were both nervous after the strain of the morning.

Mr. Marsters entered the room.

“ Here, Marsters!” exclaimed Mr. Harlowe, “ read this letter I have just received from Williams. Tell me what it means. I cannot understand it.”



Mr. Marsters took the letter in his deliberate, stolid manner, and read it slowly and carefully.

"What is this I hear?" said Melinda, entering from the apartment from which the countess had come.

She was angry; she showed it in her voice and manner. But no one removed their attention from Marsters, still slowly reading the letter.

"You have received a high honor, and declined it?" asked Melinda.

"Never mind that now," said Mr. Harlowe impatiently and with an imperative gesture.

Melinda saw that something unusual had occurred, and kept her peace.

"The letter is incomprehensible," said Mr. Marsters, who, having completed the reading, set about reading it a second time.

There was noise and bustle in the adjoining room; a door was opened noisily and closed with a bang; a shout was heard, and Dale's voice, as he talked excitedly, in the tones of which mingled delightedly the laughter of the lighter voice of Flossie.

"Where are they all?" Dale was heard to ask.

And Flossie answered:

"In the next room."

An instant later Dale, closely followed by Flossie, skipped into the room, beaming and effervescent.



“See, the conquering hero comes!” he cried. “Sound the loud timbrel o’er Egypt’s dark sea; old man Dale ‘has triumphed; his people are free.’”

“What tomfoolery is this?” asked Mr. Harlowe angrily.

“Tomfoolery?” cried Dale in assumed indignation. “No tomfoolery, my respected brother-in-law, but rather a great diplomatic achievement.”

“A diplo——” gasped Mr. Harlowe, unable to speak further, for a mighty fear had possessed him.

“In one short hour,” continued Dale, pluming himself greatly, “I, James Dale, Esq., have achieved what has perplexed statesmen of high degree for weeks and months.”

Everybody drew near to him, intent.

“You sent me to the Secretary of State to withdraw your papers?” he said to Harlowe.

“Yes, yes; and what?” demanded Mr. Harlowe breathlessly.

“Presenting my letter, the Secretary gave me the papers, and here they are.”

He displayed them, but Mr. Harlowe did not look at them, so intent was he upon what Dale was saying.

“Then,” continued Dale, with provoking deliberation, “I told him I was about to go to the President.”

“Ah!”



The ejaculation was one of great relief from Mr. Harlowe.

"Yes, I know. The Chief Justiceship. Ha! ha!" he laughed, though grimly. "It was a great joke on Williams."

"'The Chief Justiceship?' Pshaw! No; I wouldn't play such a joke on the Secretary of State. No! no! I asked, since you had withdrawn all opposition to the treaty——"

"What? what? what?" cried Mr. Harlowe, almost frantic.

Everybody started. Melinda turned pale and grasped at a chair for support, while the countess seemed almost turned into stone, so rigid did she appear, as, with bated breath, she awaited Dale's reply. It came weakly and tremblingly:

"I told the President that you had."

"Never!" shouted Mr. Harlowe, beside himself.

The papers he had held in his hand fluttered to the floor as Dale with faint voice added:

"And he said that, that being so, he would send the treaty just as it was——"

"What, man? what?" cried Mr. Harlowe in agony.

Tom Bentley burst into the room, his face white with emotion, shouting:

"Mr. Harlowe, the treaty has been sent to the Senate."

Tom's announcement was like an explosion.



Mr. Harlowe staggered back, wild with rage and disappointment. His carefully builded structure, over which he had painfully labored for four months, had crumbled into dust at the touch of the blunderer. He essayed to speak, but he choked; it almost seemed as if he was stricken with apoplexy.

Mr. Marsters, who had realized only too well that everything was lost, fell into a chair and glared at poor Dale, who stood in the center of the room a picture of fright, confusion, and bewilderment.

Melinda, realizing how much she had contributed to the disaster, was paralyzed apparently, and could neither move nor speak.

And the countess—she understood what it meant to her; but perceiving the awful disappointment of Mr. Harlowe, and its effect upon him—realizing the vanity of the great sacrifice he had only an hour before made for her, forgot her own grief in her pity for the man. She went toward Mr. Harlowe, as if to comfort and console him.

As she moved forward Mr. Harlowe found his voice.

“Dale!” he cried.

But he stopped, as if words could not express his anger. He dropped into a chair, looking at the wretched man, and merely said:

“Dale, you are more kinds of a d—— fool than I ever knew.”



## BETWEEN BOOKS.

It is now a matter of history that the Senate promptly confirmed the treaty between the United States and Russia, when it was transmitted by the President, and that thereafter it was promptly promulgated as the law of the land.

Upon its publication it was found, as had been alleged by those who had opposed the treaty, that it contained a clause providing that an attempt upon the life of the head of either Government should be regarded as a criminal and not a political offense, and therefore as extraditable. This was the point which had been most bitterly opposed, under the urgency that a very innocent offense or act, which in this country would not be regarded as an offense, could, under Russian law, be tortured into an attempt on the life of the Czar.

It had also been urged that the liberty of such of those as had cast off Russian allegiance, and sought residence and citizenship in the States, would not be safe when the treaty was enacted.

The publication showed that this clause was a part of the treaty:



“Nor shall the surrender of any person be demanded for an offense committed prior to the date at which this convention shall take place.”

This language, it was urged, made the instrument non-retroactive, and assured such as had been residents and citizens of the States entire safety.

For a time criticism was strong and urgent, and it was plainly asserted that the United States had made the Russian criminal code, with all its monstrosities, a part of its law. And it was urged that the non-retroactive clause was vague and uncertain, and therefore susceptible of varying constructions.

But these criticisms availed little. The final conservative judgment was, that there was little to fear from the evils apprehended by the malcontents, and, as Mr. Harlowe had urged when the matter was first brought to his notice, that the American tribunals, having the power of construction, could be relied upon to construe the treaty articles in the light of American freedom and justice.

So, in time the excitement subsided, and if, in the consummation there was regret anywhere, it was confined to the circles of those who had been engaged in intrigues, or who wanted to engage in further intrigues, against the Czar, and now saw that the United States was no longer a safe refuge.



But there were others, and principally lawyers, who looked forward with interest and curiosity to the first demand for the extradition of a Russian connected with an offense ante-dating the treaty, for they were by no means satisfied with the non-retroactive clause.



BOOK III.  
*THE SOLUTION.*

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CHAPTER I.

GRAY DAYS.

MR. HARLOWE and Mr. Marsters sat in moody silence over the grate fire in the bedroom of the former at the Arlington. The subject on which they had been consulting had evidently been exhausted, and Mr. Marsters was awaiting the arrival of the hour when he must go to the station to take his return train to New York. It was Christmas Eve, in 1893; and the faces of both showed that it was not a happy one to them; certainly not to Mr. Harlowe.

At length Mr. Marsters, arousing himself and looking at his watch, rose from his seat.

"Harlowe," he said, "if you have anything more to say to me, say it, for it is nearly time for me to go."

He crossed the room, and gathered together his hat, gloves, topcoat, and satchel. Mr. Harlowe



rose from his chair, and, placing his back to the fire, warmed the palms of his hands behind him.

"I think I have said everything," he replied gloomily. "You go back to Mexico immediately after Christmas?"

"Yes," said Mr. Marsters, examining the pockets of his coat to see that his papers were safe. "Yes, and I hope my stay will not be longer than a week, though there are contingencies, somewhat remote, to be sure, that may prolong it."

"I wish you were not going at all," said Mr. Harlowe regretfully. "Ever since that awful blunder I have lost confidence in myself, and I lean upon you more than ever."

"Nonsense!" Mr. Marsters came back to the fire, and stood on the rug opposite to his partner. "I don't want you to talk like that, Harlowe. It is cowardice!"

"A physician loses all confidence in his skill when it comes to applying it to his own."

Mr. Marsters looked dubiously at Mr. Harlowe. He did not understand his partner.

"The blunder was none of yours," he said. "It was the stupidity of that rattle-pate Dale! His punishment ought to be severe."

"No," replied Mr. Harlowe; "it was less his blunder than Melinda's."

"Melinda!" ejaculated Mr. Marsters, astounded.



“Yes; she misled Dale. She confessed it; took all the blame on herself. You see, it was her jealousy.”

“Jealousy of the countess?” inquired Mr. Marsters.

“Yes; bad trait that. Awfully jealous of the countess. I ought to inoculate her with cocaine; positive cure. But she won’t have it; dead to science.”

“Drop that folly,” said Mr. Marsters, “and tell me what you mean.”

“There’s little to tell. Melinda overheard a portion of my remarks on the withdrawal of those briefs you advised, and concluded that I had withdrawn from the whole treaty business. She thought the making of the treaty would send the countess away, so she appealed to Dale to hasten it if he could. Unfortunately he could. With fatal facility he adopted the one course to that end, with the result you know.”

“And now?”

“Melinda is in sackcloth and ashes; the defender of and apologist for Dale; metaphorically at the feet of the countess in remorse.”

“And you?”

“Well, what could I do? Nothing but swear, which I did promptly and with vigor, and keep out of sight, for everybody who knew of it laughed over it as the best joke of the season.”



"Joke!" exclaimed Mr. Marsters indignantly.

"Oh! We couldn't see the joke, but the President could; he was very appreciative."

"In what way?" asked Mr. Marsters.

"He laughed over it for two weeks; told it to everybody; it was his great story for his state dinners. Then, a civil magistracy becoming unexpectedly vacant in this district, he declared that Dale should be a judge anyhow, and procured the appointment for him."

"What? For Dale?" exclaimed Marsters, aghast at this exhibition of official responsibility.

"Yes; he was sworn in this morning."

Mr. Marsters was not affected humorously; with a grave face he moved to the mantelpiece, resting his elbow upon it, and looking into the fire. Harlowe shifted his position and assumed a similar attitude at the other end of the mantel.

"No," continued Mr. Harlowe in the same hopeless tone, "I cannot think of anything more to say. The treaty has been promulgated; all the dangers we apprehended in the beginning are present quite as much as if we had done nothing. It is true that many high legal authorities believe that the retroactive clause is sufficient; I don't. It is like a sieve—full of holes."

"Everything depends how it may be construed by the courts, and——"

"That is like the white man—very 'onsartin.'"



Mr. Marsters did not reply; both were silent for a time.

"I am hanging on, awaiting some developments from Kroupiève," said Mr. Harlowe, breaking the silence. "Nothing as yet is indicated whether, having taken such strong ground that the treaty in its terms could not be considered as retroactive, he dare not proceed to action, or whether he is building up secretly a new intrigue—time must tell."

"He is in Washington yet?"

"Oh, yes! Very much in evidence in a social way."

"As intimate with the President as ever?"

"Quite as much; consulted frequently on foreign matters—his intimate knowledge of foreign complications, you know, is the excuse."

"Hum!"

"My intuitions were right about the Berlin mission," Harlowe went on in the most ordinary way, neither regretful nor triumphant. "It *was* his intrigue; he wanted to get me out of the case and country. Williams knows it now, though he didn't think so at first."

"Hum!" Mr. Marsters frowned.

"There will be a break between Williams and the President if Kroupiève's further interference in foreign affairs is permitted. It is a sore thing for Williams to think that what the head of the



Foreign Department had failed to do for a year was accomplished within a week, by a man having no official relations, and a foreigner at that. A break in the Cabinet would be a queer result from this case, wouldn't it? My cue has been to allay the irritation of the Secretary and to persuade him not to resign, at least until after the game is played out."

"Game played out?" repeated Mr. Marsters. "Then you think it is not played out yet?"

"If I do, the countess does not. She is certain that a demonstration from the prince will be made before long."

"In what form does she expect it?"

"A demand for her extradition."

Mr. Marsters studied the fire, and Mr. Harlowe lost himself in thought.

After a time Mr. Marsters looked up, steadily gazing at his partner, of which Mr. Harlowe was wholly oblivious, so engrossed was he with his own thoughts.

"Harlowe," at length Mr. Marsters asked, "has the countess ever thought of flight or concealment?"

The question had the effect of a shock upon Mr. Harlowe; he stood erect, and replied with emphasis, almost haste:

"That she positively refuses to do; she says



the contest must be fought out, and as well now as at any time. She says, and from the beginning has said, that nothing will induce her to return to Russia. A wonderful woman, Marsters—a wonderful woman! In fact, John, the calmness of her resolution has been—well, it disquiets me.”

He leaned his head upon his hands, resting them on the mantelpiece. Marsters regarded him for a moment, and then went to him closely. There was awe in his tone when he spoke.

“Do you mean——”

“I don’t know what I mean,” cried Harlowe, lifting his head, all the emotion and agitation he had suppressed coming to the surface in an instant. “But I do know that if this thing goes wrong to the end, life will have but little value to me.”

He looked defiantly at Marsters, as if he had said: “There, you have the whole of it; make the most of it.”

Looking so scrutinizingly into the eyes of his partner and friend, Mr. Marsters seemed to be stern. Then a wonderfully softened expression—wonderful in Marsters—stole over his face, an expression of sympathizing pity. He placed his left hand upon the shoulder of Harlowe, his right grasping that of his partner.

“Good-by, Chester!” he said. “If a demon-



stration is made, telegraph me at once, and I'll drop everything and come. Together we'll see that things do not go wrong. God bless you!"

They looked into each other's eyes. No words were spoken, but the sympathy, and pledge of assistance, was well understood. Releasing Harlowe's hand, Marsters crossed the room, took up his hat, coat, and satchel, and went out.

Mr. Harlowe stood still on the rug, nor even turned to watch him going. When the door closed he dropped into the chair at his side, and, bending forward, with his elbows resting on his knees, stared into the fire.

What thoughts occupied his mind he did not make apparent, but so absorbing were they, and so dead was he to externals, that, though he heard, he was oblivious to the rap on the door; it was repeated several times before he answered.

The messenger brought a request from the countess that he would see her in the general parlor.

He obeyed her summons, and found her awaiting him. Despite his efforts to appear before her divested of the anxiety he had not attempted to conceal from his partner, the quick perceptions of the lady were not deceived.

"You have heard something to trouble you," she said impulsively.

"No," he replied as he placed a chair for her,



for she was yet standing, "no, nothing of any kind."

"But you are anxious—troubled," she persisted.

"I have been reflecting."

"Ah! You have not been the same since the amusing blunder of the friend Dale."

"Amusing!" repeated Mr. Harlowe with sarcastic bitterness.

"Amusing I do say, for after all it was amusing," replied the lady; and then, with the fatalism of her race, she added: "Why worry? It was to be. You are not to blame!"

Mr. Harlowe bent over the lady looking up at him with a smile upon her face and with trust and confidence in her deep violet eyes.

"You are more than good to say so; you are very generous," he said after a moment, gravely. "But you are wrong. I am very much to blame. I have done nothing whatever for you."

"You have done nothing for me!" she exclaimed reproachfully.

"Nothing," he insisted, "for in a case like this everything must be measured by results. I have brought you none. My value to you, above any one of a thousand others, was that I had a close approach to the Secretary of State, who, in the nature of things, would have a controlling influence in our affairs. Where I was supposed to be strong,



I have failed—failed, possibly, to make the proper use of my advantage. *I am* to blame.”

“You have done nothing for me?” she repeated, intense gratitude shining in her eyes. “You have given me strength, and support, and friendship. You have inspired me to struggle, when I despaired. Ah!”

She sprang to her feet as she exclaimed:

“And he calls this nothing—the devotion he has given me, so sacrificing and so delicate that I knew not before the meaning of delicacy; nothing! Ah!” She swept across the room in an effort to control her rising emotion in action. “Ah! The man is so great that I seem little as I learn it.”

She came back to him in her impulsive way.

“But enough of this now,” she said. “I have had my mail to-day; it brings me news. The secret police have been busy with my affairs in Russia. It has inquired until it knows just how I left Russia, and who assisted me. It has visited my friends and seized my letters written from this country; and even taken from my old nurse the letters and the money I have sent her to keep her from starving.”

“This means what?”

“Something. What, I do not know; but something. The secret police do not waste time on nothing. We shall hear in time. Kroupiève is not sleeping.”



"Hum!" Mr. Harlowe thought a moment. "Then you think they are making up a case against you?"

"That is my thought, my friend," she replied calmly. "It is preparation for my extradition."

Mr. Harlowe made no remark for some time, and when he did it was seemingly without relevance to the subject.

"Countess," he said, "I have advised from the beginning your seclusion from society."

"Yes," she replied, "and your advice has accorded with my inclinations."

"Now I shall advise the contrary."

"The contrary?" asked the countess in open-eyed surprise. "And why, dear friend?"

"The conditions are all changed," he went on. "In the contest we have waged, and which ended so disastrously, it was advisable that it should not appear to be waged in the interest of a single individual, so we sought to seclude rather than obtrude your personality. But now, if your apprehensions are realized, you cannot escape from standing in the open in your own person. The attack will be made upon you without reserve. You are little known; you have but few friends or allies. Before Prince Kroupiève shall take the step you fear I propose that you shall become well known, shall have many friends and allies. To gather these you must enter into the social festivi-



ties. I would have you become the vogue—the fashion.”

“ You think this is necessary? ” she asked.

“ I would not advise it if I did not think so.”

There was an expression of reluctance on the fair face, though she said nothing. Mr. Harlowe noted it.

“ Believe me, I see no pleasure in this,” he went on. “ Indeed, I am advising it against my own desires—perhaps to my own prejudice.”

She looked up inquiringly; she did not comprehend him.

“ But,” he went on, “ personal feelings must be sacrificed. Prince Kroupiève’s agents could attack an unknown woman with few friends with comparative ease, but would find difficulty and array public sentiment against them in attacking one well known and with many friends, while we, in defense, could command the influence of allies. I even propose that you take a house, set up an establishment, and entertain brilliantly, in order to gather that army of allies.”

“ It shall be as you will,” said the lady. “ I will be guided by you. You shall choose the house at once. I will send for Pietro to-day.”



## CHAPTER II.

### CONSEQUENCES.

DALE's blunder had one peculiar effect.

Melinda and himself were drawn into more kindly relations, and a respect for each other grew up in both. This was because of their bearing under the distressing circumstances of the blunder.

When Dale comprehended all that it meant to the countess, and saw the prostrating disappointment of Harlowe, he was for running away. Moral courage was not his strong point; all his life he had fled from disagreeable and unpleasant things. To meet daily and hourly the two persons so deeply wronged by his act, innocent as it was in motive, was more than he could contemplate. So, taking Flossie into his confidence, he told her he was going away. Where, he did not know, but somewhere out of sight of and contact with the consequences of the blunder. He had made no other defense of himself than that he had acted, as he supposed, in the line of his brother-in-law's desire. Even when Mr. Marsters, losing momentary control of his temper, had intimated that Kroupiève had exerted a pernicious influence upon him,



he had mildly replied that Mr. Marsters should know better, and that, when he was in a cooler frame of mind, he would regret the injustice of the remark.

Flossie, desolated over the prospective loss of the companionship of her father, went in tears to Melinda for consolation.

Melinda was much troubled. She knew only too well that it was she who had put the fatal idea into the mind of Dale; that he had undertaken the unfortunate enterprise at her suggestion and in a desire to please her. Before Flossie came to her she had recognized the manliness with which Dale had shielded her from blame by his silence, accepting all the odium without recourse to that oldest of all excuses, "the woman tempted me." He had been strong enough to endure, while she had been too weak to confess her controlling influence. She respected him; something she had never done before.

"I must see your uncle," she said when she heard Flossie's tale of woe. Hastening to her brother while her impulse was warm, she made a full confession, taking her due share of blame. Mr. Harlowe was so much astonished by his sister's admission of her weakness that he could not even draw from it a moral conclusion, but permitted himself to be taken to Dale, whom, if he did not wholly absolve of his participation in the disastrous



blunder, he at least commanded to remain where he was, and not make a greater fool of himself than he already done, by going away.

So Dale stayed, to the content of Melinda and the great joy of Flossie, with a greater respect for his sister-in-law.

But Dale was not wholly comfortable; there was the countess. If, with delicate consideration for his feelings, she avoided mention of the disaster in his presence, he felt that she laid the wreck of her hopes at his door; she had not been informed of Melinda's influence in this act—she could not be without also telling her of Melinda's jealousy and desire to have her removed from the family circle.

Nor was he more comfortable in those circles outside where he was so welcome; the blunder was regarded as a rare joke, and the comment and witicism leveled at him were very hard to bear with a smiling face and light manner.

But when, as an astounding culmination of the joke, he was offered the position of a civil magistrate, Dale was confounded. It seemed to him as if the blunder, as to which Mr. Harlowe must naturally be sensitive, was to be embalmed in political history. With a rueful countenance he went to his brother-in-law, told him of the appointment, and at the same time of his intention of declining it, since it seemed as if he were benefiting by a



misfortune he was instrumental in bringing upon his friends. Harlowe, however, laughed loud and long; it was such an absurd and fantastic culmination. He bade Dale to accept the office, as he did not think political history would concern itself much about it.

So Dale accepted the office and assumed its duties, and about the time he did, the fact was spread abroad that the Countess Naletoff, the interesting mystery of the Arlington, had broken her seclusion and incognito, had taken an historical house, and would renew the splendors of its hospitalities.

Michaelovitch early carried the information to Prince Kroupiève, whereupon that gentleman became very grave.

"Have you confirmed the rumor?" he inquired sternly.

"There is no doubt of it, master," replied Rodion. "The Harlowe has transacted all the business of the lease. He has tired of being the guardian of *La Belle Comtesse*."

"You are mistaken," coldly said the prince. "It is a profound stroke of policy upon the part of Mr. Harlowe; he is a very able man."

Rodion looked at his chief in astonishment. "But——" he began.

The prince silenced him with an impatient wave of his hand.



“Mr. Harlowe has anticipated my plans; he meets me at every turn and doubly increases my difficulties. Not one single triumph is to my credit in this contest with him.”

“Ah, master!” exclaimed Rodion reproachfully, yet respectfully, “the treaty!”

“Not my triumph!” replied Kroupiève severely. “I will not let myself be deceived. I was already beaten until that light-headed fool Dale, by his blunder, brought about my desires. It was my good fortune, not my achievement.”

Rodion did not reply. This self-depreciation of the prince was unusual, and portended that his master was deeply disgusted.

“We have measured our abilities against each other,” the prince went on, rather as if thinking aloud, “and I have not triumphed. Even with the treaty secured, so skillfully did Mr. Harlowe conduct himself that I am in a false position under it, for he made me concede the very point I bent all my energies to avoid. And now——”

He stopped, rose from his seat, walking up and down his apartment. Rodion watched him with interest. He could not see why the mere fact of a lady taking the place in society to which she was entitled should so disturb his chief.

“And now?” he finally asked, unable longer to restrain his curiosity.

“And now, instead of demanding the extradi-



tion of an unknown woman, I must demand that of a woman of rank and fashion, with powerful friends to protest on her behalf."

"But, master," said Rodion, "she is not that."

"She will be, under the skillful guidance of this lawyer, whom I thought I could crush as I would a fly between my thumb and forefinger."

Rodion comprehended. The prince continued:

"That is what this new move of Harlowe means. He is very able. Well, he shall not find me idle in the meantime. Matters must be pressed with greater haste at home. I must go even more into this detestable society. And you, Rodion, you have new work to do. This lady—this Countess Naletoff—who aspires to lead the fashions, must not go forward to her triumphal march without encountering obstacles. Come with me, and you shall have your instructions."



## CHAPTER III.

### MR. HARLOWE'S DIPLOMACY.

WHAT the instructions the Prince gave to Rodion Michaelovitch were Mr. Harlowe learned in good time.

The establishment of the countess as a feature of Washington society that winter was successfully carried forward, and with vigor and speed. Mr. Harlowe had made no empty boast when he promised that he would open all doors to his client, even the more exclusive. By no means a considerable figure in aristocratic, or indeed fashionable circles, yet he could command influences which he exerted with such skill and deftness that the strings he pulled were not observed. His success, however, would not have been so complete had he not had a wonderful aid in the countess herself. In less than a month from the day that the doors of her new home were opened she was talked of as no other woman in Washington was; and in Washington, as we all know, that is the highest passport to favor. It is vulgar, but it is true. Her grace, her beauty, her *toilettes*, and her winsomeness were subjects for columns of tattle in the pub-



lic press; her tact and wit made her *salon*, in an astonishingly short time, the most attractive place in the city for the elect and the distinguished on her weekly days. Distinguished statesmen stole an hour from legislative and administrative duties to grace her parlors; and she avoided a mistake often made; she cultivated the wives and daughters of powerful families with even greater assiduity than she did the wielders of power. When she gave her first grand dance she was the vogue. Harlowe, in the background, but always present, watched with an increasing admiration the woman who was executing his plans with such consummate tact and intelligence; Kroupiève, never failing in his appearance, and vying with all others in conspicuous deference to the lady, watched with increasing alarm the rapidity of her advance.

One day there struggled into circulation a bit of scandal, coming from whence no one knew, but most industriously impelled by an invisible force. In it was involved the name of the countess; it was not very bad, since it did not touch the moral life of the lady. The intimation was that the lady was a nihilist, whose absence from her country was compulsory.

“We all know what nihilists are,” it was whispered by all manner of people who did not know; “people of blood, you know, who do not hesitate



over the most wicked crimes—dynamite and all the rest—in the sacred name of liberty and all that; perverted sort of beings, who bind themselves to obey the orders of secret societies, even if it leads them to the taking of life; and—well, you know, the countess left Russia very suddenly, and all of her relatives have been sent to Siberia.”

Immediately alive to the circulation of this small bit of scandal, Mr. Harlowe, earnestly observant, could not see that it had any other effect than to increase the interest and curiosity with which the countess was regarded. But he knew this was but the beginning of an organized movement to lessen the influence the countess had acquired. He determined to deal with the matter promptly and with boldness.

So, one day, to his great surprise, the Prince Kroupiève received the card of Mr. Harlowe. Turning it over and over, as if he would discover through it some indication of the purpose of the lawyer's call, the Russian hesitated, thought, and finally concluded to admit his visitor.

He received Mr. Harlowe with extreme courtesy, permitting no appearance of the fact that, when they had parted on the previous occasion of their meeting, it was with something like hostility.

Mr. Harlowe had neither time nor inclination for courtesies; he had not expected to be admitted



to the prince's presence; indeed he preferred to be denied admittance. His call was merely a move in the game, and he desired open hostility. By admitting him the prince had scored better than he knew, for he embarrassed his opponent.

So soon as he could Mr. Harlowe opened the business of his call.

"You are no doubt informed," he said, "that I stand in the relation of counsel to the Countess Naletoff."

"Yes," the prince replied, "I have been so told. I have not been able to understand why a lady—a foreigner—traveling in this country should need a counsel, but since she thinks she does, her judgment in selection has not been at fault."

There was far more sincerity in this reply, delivered with a courteous bow, than Mr. Harlowe gave credit for; indeed, he thought he detected an accompanying sneer, but he ignored his thought, for he was determined not to lose his temper.

"Assuming that position," he went on, "I assume, as a consequence, the position of the guardianship of the lady's rights, privileges, and good fame."

"She could not have a better guardian," courteously replied the prince.

"Whether she could have done better is not a subject for discussion for me," said Mr. Harlowe;



"but the time has arrived when I must exercise my office."

"Ah!" said the prince with an affectation of solicitous interest, "the good fame of the lady has been attacked?"

"I have not said so," promptly returned Mr. Harlowe. "But since her rights, to an extent, have been invaded, I am led to suppose that the time is not far distant when an attempt on her fair fame will be made."

"You distress me," said the prince. "I regret that a countrywoman of mine should have placed herself in such a position as to give rise to your apprehensions."

"Please do not give my words a meaning they do not convey, prince," said Mr. Harlowe with dignity. "My apprehensions are not as to anything she has done, but as to what other people are intending to do, and have already begun."

"Ah!" the prince replied with an assumption of bored indifference, "perhaps you will be good enough to be more explicit."

"Within a short time the rumor has been set afloat that the countess, being a nihilist, was compelled to leave Russia hurriedly."

"Yes; I have heard something of that."

"I am sure you have."

"It has been widely circulated."

"Most ingeniously and intelligently circulated,



the source carefully concealed," replied Mr. Harlowe impressively.

"Well, my dear Mr. Harlowe," said the prince, artistically suppressing a carefully conceived yawn.

"Assuming all this to be true, what then?"

"It is not true, and no one is better informed as to that than the Prince Kroupiève."

The prince laughed cynically.

"Oh, sir, you give me credit for greater information than I possess, and, besides, you are far from specific. You say that the rumor, industriously circulated, charges the countess with being a nihilist, and with a hurried flight from Russia. There are two assertions; which of them do you mean that I am informed is not true?"

"Both."

The prince laughed again, apparently in great enjoyment.

"My dear sir, were you a Russian or one familiar with Russian life and conditions I would say that you were amusingly innocent, but, since you are one of these favored liberty-possessing Americans, your belief is perhaps pardonable."

"And earnest and sincere," replied Mr. Harlowe firmly.

"Ah! Let us then take the matter of the nihilist. There are many of those people in my country—many more than the authorities can tell; circumstances—accidents sometimes—dis-



cover that a trusted agent of government, an intimate friend, a boon companion, your mistress is a nihilist. How, then, can I say that I know that anyone is not a nihilist? They are found in all ranks. The most I can say is that I do not know that anyone is a nihilist. As to the countess, I can say that I do not know that she is a nihilist."

"Your reply is adroit and ingenious," said Mr. Harlowe. "At least you can refrain from saying that she is a nihilist."

The prince looked up quickly, an angry gleam in his eye.

"Do you mean to say that I have said she is one?"

With a shrewd, sarcastic smile the lawyer replied:

"I do not know that you have said so," he added; "but your knowledge as to her hurried flight from Europe?"

"I suppose there is no doubt anywhere that the countess did hurriedly and secretly leave Russia?"

"But not because of nihilism," quickly responded Mr. Harlowe. "Upon that point at least the prince has exact knowledge."

"Such information as Mr. Harlowe has on that point must have been gained from the countess."

Mr. Harlowe bowed in acquiescence.

"That, then," continued the prince, with a



shrewd smile, "would by lawyers, I believe, be called *ex parte*."

He looked at Mr. Harlowe for an answer, which the lawyer made after some little hesitation:

"An uncontradicted or uncontroverted statement at length assumes the character of truth."

"Possibly," returned the prince, "but—I hope I will not be judged offensive—but who is it that makes the advocate and the counsel of the lady the determining judge in a dispute in which she is a party?"

Mr. Harlowe felt that he was not advancing in the purpose of his call; that so far he was being outgeneraled, and was placed at a disadvantage. He rose from his chair.

"I fear the prince is too adroit in the handling of delicate weapons for a mere republican lawyer," he said. "I am forced then to the use of those in which, perhaps, the danger is greater, if less skill is required in their wielding."

The prince rose, much interested.

"The fact remains," Mr. Harlowe continued, "that the rumors concerning the countess are circulated. Neither a Russian familiar with Russian conditions, nor a diplomatist trained to believe nothing and everything, I am yet a man of some experience, accustomed to rely with confidence upon my knowledge of human nature."



"A slight support, sir," laughed the prince.

"Perhaps," returned Mr. Harlowe; "nevertheless I lean confidently upon it, and I am firmly convinced that the Countess Naletoff is neither a nihilist, nor even remotely connected with one who is, notwithstanding that the wrongs she has endured at the hands of those wielding imperial power might well have turned her into one."

The prince attempted eagerly to speak, but Mr. Harlowe prevented him.

"Do not mistake or misapprehend my words," interposed Mr. Harlowe. "Everything I express is mine, not that of the countess. Permit me, without further delay, to discharge the purpose of the call. It is within your power by a single utterance to put an end to these rumors. I have come to ask if you will do so."

"My dear sir," laughed the prince most cynically. "How can I after I have explained that I cannot know but that they are true?"

"Nor that the previous life and course and affiliations of the countess make it highly improbable?"

"Oh, how little you know of our Russia!" The prince shrugged his shoulders. "The most improbable of people are the most probable of nihilists."

"Under the Russian Criminal Code," promptly



retorted Mr. Harlowe. "Yes; I know that. However, I shall not affect to misunderstand you. You decline to quiet these rumors."

The prince shrugged his shoulders and spread his hands in a deprecatory manner.

"These rumors," Mr. Harlowe continued, "are, as I firmly believe, but a prelude of others of a more damaging nature to be as secretly and as indirectly circulated. They will be circulated in pursuance of a well-conceived plan working to an end which I flatter myself I have anticipated. I would like to say that the methods employed, however successfully elsewhere, are likely to prove dangerous to those who employ them here—in this country—indeed, to have the nature of a boomerang."

"I have no doubt," said the prince with an unmistakable sneer at this time, "that Mr. Harlowe is as wise in this matter as he is in all things, but, surely he will pardon me if I say I fail to see why I should be made the recipient of his wisdom."

"Because," replied Mr. Harlowe—"I hope I shall not be offensive—I firmly believe, am convinced by investigation, that the Prince Kroupiève is employing those methods."

"Sir!" exclaimed the prince angrily, "you abuse my courtesy."

"I hope not," replied Mr. Harlowe calmly. "I have not considered that point. Had I done so,



it would not have deterred me from expressing my opinion. I did not come here, nor do I ask, for your courtesy. I am here to say that the present rumor must be quieted, and that you must desist from further rumors."

"Sir! I would have you expelled from my apartments for your insolence," haughtily replied the prince, "but that I know that it is a curious instance of impotent American—what you call—bounce."

"No; it is not impotent," replied Mr. Harlowe, quite unmoved. "I think we quite understand each other, prince. I am not to be imposed upon, for I know you as no other man in this country does."

The prince laughed sardonically.

"Don't sneer nor laugh, prince," continued Mr. Harlowe. "This day will probably end our intercourse, and you would do better to hear me out to the end. I know you, I say; I know the relations you would occupy toward the countess; I know your motives and the end, and the further ends you seek to achieve; I know that they have in your interest been made state affairs; I know that for you the treaty meant this and only this; I know how you persecuted the countess until she fled Russia to escape you; I know also that you are here as the secret emissary of the Emperor; and I know how you, unauthorized, so



far as other nations would regard you, have interfered in the diplomatic affairs between this and other nations not your own."

"And knowing these things, what then?" sneered the Russian.

"There is a free press in this country, and if there is one single suggestion of further rumors, I will deny them in the public press, tell their source, the purpose sought to be attained, and inform the world who you are and what you are and the despicable methods you stoop to employ."

"You do not dare—the press would not dare," exclaimed the Russian, aghast.

"Oh, yes! It would all be very acceptable. The press is free here, prince; there is over it no supervision or censorship, and it resents any attempt at influence."

"Would you involve the two countries in a war?"

"Oh, no! There'll be no war. You are a very important man, prince, but you cannot make of yourself a *casus belli*. This is my ultimatum, prince."

Mr. Harlowe moved toward the door. "I know," he said as he laid his hand on the knob, "you regard my treatment of this matter as quite brutal—as coarse and vulgar. I admit it. I admit that I am not a match for you in fence with rapiers; with the bludgeon of main strength and



unalterable determination, however, I secure my point. It is no idle threat that I make."

"May I ask," said the prince with all the sneering contempt he could express by face and tone, "whether you represent the national type of chivalry?"

Mr. Harlowe had opened the door as he had finished his speech, but on hearing the question he closed it again.

"That is a question I cannot answer," he replied, "but I can tell you that the peculiarity of the chivalry of this nation is that it resents as a personal injury the oppression of a woman and holds in bitter contempt the oppressor. In fact, in the more highly civilized portions of the country—the mining districts and the Pacific coast—it has even been known to lynch the oppressor. I bid you good-day."

He went out of the room, leaving the prince standing in the middle of the floor.



## CHAPTER IV.

### A RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES.

IN the circulation of the rumor as to her connection with nihilism the countess saw a repetition of the methods which had driven her from France. As did Mr. Harlowe, she apprehended the spread of further rumors attacking her private character. This she had experienced in Paris; there it had been without effect, for with strict caution and extreme watchfulness she had avoided all compromising situations, and the very circumspection of her life prevented a single incident upon which suspicion could hang an argument. In Paris it requires something more than vague gossip to ostracize a woman. There her great annoyance had been spies, who followed her everywhere, even finding place in her own household. In Washington she was freed from all this. The protection Mr. Harlowe had afforded her in his own family, and the watchful care he exercised over the house, made it inexpedient and inadvisable to attempt that sort of espionage. The prince himself, after a short residence in the country, found that there



was little to be gained and much to be lost by the employment of such agents. But what the countess feared was the circulation of scandalous rumor. She had lived long enough in the States to learn that slander and scandal were serious; that the American matron was given to looking askance upon and drawing her skirts from one who was "talked about"; that it was not necessary that the thing should be proved, but only alleged, to have the condemnation of avoidance fall. Hence she lived in apprehension.

Mr. Harlowe had neither informed the countess that he intended to visit the prince, nor afterward that he had. In the first instance he did not know how the enterprise would result and feared to raise hopes that might not be realized; in the other he had no immediate results to bring her, so he maintained silence.

In fact, when he sent his card to the prince he did not expect to be admitted, but he had determined that the threat he did make should reach the prince in an authoritative manner. Though contemplating the rather remote, as he regarded, contingency of seeing the prince, nevertheless he had carefully considered the course to pursue. He had therefore arrived at the conclusion that any effort at forcing the matter to the point of obtaining from the prince a declaration as to what he would do under the threat, would



be unwise. Rather he thought to show the prince what could be done, and what light he could be placed in, and let him consider it without being forced to any admission, or a defiance, would be more likely to result in withholding the prince.

In no little suspense and anxiety, then, he saw the weeks pass without fresh rumors being spread, and indeed saw the nihilistic one subside, so that he finally reached the conclusion that he had won a decided victory over the prince. In the contentment and exhilaration of that conclusion he told the countess.

It was on one of her reception days, in the latter part of the winter, that he told her. He had entered late in the afternoon when the guests were departing, and had met the prince in the hall. They had exchanged stately bows; and Mr. Harlowe, though he had advised that nothing should be done to even indicate that the prince's visits were not agreeable, could hardly restrain his indignation over the thought that the man who had so long and so persistently persecuted the countess should have the audacity to present himself before her.

The last one had gone when the countess, throwing herself upon a fauteuil, said:

"I am glad you came; Prince Kroupiève was here again."

"Yes; I met him in the hall as I entered."



"He never fails; and twice recently has sent his card in when I have been alone."

"And you saw him?"

"No; I will not see him alone. On such a day, when others are present, yes, he may come. It is better so."

Mr. Harlowe thought a moment, and then said:

"I cannot fathom his purpose. He gives countenance and strength to your position by appearing here, polite, deferential, and respectful. Were he to stay away it would be marked, and would be commented upon to your disadvantage—that is, he could make it appear to your disadvantage without being called to account for it."

"There are no new rumors?" said the countess.

"No; and I am now satisfied there will not be. The old one is dying out."

"And why, friend?"

Mr. Harlowe told her of his visit to the prince.

She listened to the recital with intense interest and heightened color, bending forward that she might not lose a word, her face reflecting the emotion the tale called forth, and her eyes never lifted from his face.

"And he did not insult you?"

"Oh, he tried to! I had insulted him."

"He did not challenge you to duel?"

"Oh, no! In the first place, this is America, where the duello is not recognized; again, the



prince, not being a man of honor, was not compelled to defend anything, since no one else was present."

"You are very brave!" she exclaimed.

"Brave!" repeated Mr. Harlowe. "There was nothing brave in what I did."

"The prince more than once has been on the field of honor."

"The field of honor!" exclaimed Mr. Harlowe.

"Ah! Yes. But, countess, in this country we have taken down the fences about that field and turned it into a common."

"You attacked his honor. I am surprised he did not resent it."

"There is a kind of honor, countess, which its possessor regarding as he does his life, is quick to defend and for its own sake, but Kroupiève's is of a kind, sensitive only when there are witnesses to an attack upon it. With such men there is great safety in dialogue."

The face of the countess expressed an admiration for Mr. Harlowe that embarrassed and confused him. After a while she withdrew her eyes from him and bent them upon the floor, apparently in thought, but Mr. Harlowe soon became aware that she was making a strong effort to control and suppress an agitation for which there seemed to be no reason.

She rose from her seat impulsively—so impul-



sively as to cause Mr. Harlowe to rise also. She made a movement toward him in the same impulsive manner, but checked herself.

“Go now,” she said. “I am not myself. If I speak to tell you my gratitude I will——”

“Don’t speak of gratitude!” interrupted Mr. Harlowe. “You are unnerved by the strain these social affairs put upon you. I do not believe—that is, I fancy that they are disagreeable to you. Well, I am beginning to think that you may bring it all to an end if you wish.”

“Why?” she asked.

“I think that Kroupiève has abandoned the effort, or—perhaps better said—the contest.”

“You do not know the man!”

At this moment the servant entered, bearing a note for the countess. Taking it from the salver, with no little excitement she recognized the writing of the man who was at the moment their topic.

“The prince!” she exclaimed. “Will you permit me?”

Rapidly she opened the letter and absorbed its contents.

“You are right!” she cried, making no effort to conceal her joy. “You are right! The prince abandons the contest. Read!”

She handed the note to Mr. Harlowe, who read:

“The Prince Kroupiève presents his compli-



ments to the Countess Naletoff; and, having been unable to secure, even for a brief moment, uninterrupted speech with her during this afternoon, now begs that she will receive him this evening. The prince begs to announce that he has been recalled to Russia by the instructions of his Imperial Master."

"Yes," said Harlowe; "that would seem to be the inference. He has abandoned the contest, but not a last effort to persuade you."

"You shall see my reply."

She hastened into an inner apartment, followed by Mr. Harlowe, and, seating herself at a writing table, hastily dashed off these lines:

"The Countess Naletoff presents her compliments to the Prince Kroupiève, and begs to say that, wearied with the afternoon, she will be 'at home' to no one this evening."

She handed the note to Mr. Harlowe with a laugh.

"It is curt and unmistakable," he replied. "Perhaps it is as well, though."

He handed it back to her. As she took it she laughed again.

"Really," she said, "you speak as if you felt sorrow for him."



"Pity I do," he replied gravely.

"Pity? And why?" as she inclosed the note.

"Because the note assures him of a loss which must be very hard to bear—very hard to bear."

The countess, struck perhaps more by his tone than by his words, turned slowly to look at him and met his eyes bent earnestly upon her—so earnestly and with such meaning that she flushed under it. They were each only saved from an embarrassment by the entry again of the servant, who told Mr. Harlowe that Mr. Dale was in the reception room very anxious to see him.

Mr. Harlowe, with a feeling of alarm he could not account for, though probably due to the fact that Dale had sought him there, and therefore on a mission of more than usual importance, immediately went to him.

A glance at Dale's face justified his feeling of alarm. Dale was pale and excited.

"Harlowe," he cried, "you are alone?"

"Yes; what is the matter?"

"The extradition of the countess has been demanded."

Harlowe staggered; he grasped at the back of a chair for support. The blood left his face so suddenly that for a moment Dale thought his brother-in-law would faint. It was such a shock to come just at the moment when he and the countess were felicitating themselves that the contest was ended



—that Kroupiève had abandoned the field. And now it was on again in its worst and final form. The letter of Kroupiève, so far from being a confession of defeat, was something far different—perhaps a tender of compromise or of concession. Under the impulse of this thought, he turned toward the door to ask the countess not to send the letter, but to see the prince as he requested. But at the door he was checked by another thought. There was no such thing as compromise or concession. To win anything, the prince must win all—the countess must return to Russia. Kroupiève meant only to suggest that the countess should yield before the machinery of government was put in operation. He turned back to Dale.

“How do you know this?”

“It was given to me confidentially,” replied Dale. “The demand has only just been made. There is no mistake about it, Chester.”

The countess entered. She carried in her hand the note she had just addressed to the prince. She saw at once that something more than usual had occurred. When they looked at her she knew that the occurrence was related to herself.

“What is it?” she asked.

Mr. Harlowe hesitated a moment.

“Tell me!” she demanded imperiously. “Conceal nothing from me.”



"We were mistaken," replied Harlowe. "Kroupiève has not abandoned the contest."

"Ah! My extradition is demanded."

"Yes," said Harlowe simply.

"Yes," she repeated. "Kroupiève never forgets, never foregoes, never ceases."

"That letter," said Harlowe, pointing to the one she held in her hand; "is it wise to send it now?"

"Why?" she asked.

"Were he to come, it might be to offer some mitigation of his stern determination."

"He will be content with nothing but surrender."

"To send it now in that shape will be taken as a defiance and a challenge."

"Ah!"

The countess stepped to the bell and rang it. The others, surprised, looked to see what she meant to do. She merely smiled at them, more brave and self-possessed than either. The servant appeared at the door.

"Take this note," she said, "to its address at once. Let there be no delay."



## CHAPTER V.

### A BOMB EXPLODES.

THE hour at which Dale communicated his fateful news was too late for Mr. Harlowe to confirm it. The sources of information he might naturally expect to approach were beyond his reach that night. He did not doubt the truth of Dale's tale, but, on questioning him, the lawyer discovered that his knowledge was not exact, and that he could tell nothing but that Russia had preferred a claim for the surrender of the countess. A hope sprang up in his breast, and, after the manner of the proverbial drowning man clutching at a straw, he thought perhaps Russia had made a tentative demand, hoping for a construction of the disputed clauses. He expressed that idea to the countess, possibly as much to lessen her apprehension and fear as because of strong belief in its truth.

"No," said the countess, with a calmness and decision that surprised both himself and Dale; "there is nothing experimental in it. The demand is made in the name of Russia, but it is made by Kroupiève. He is earnest and determined. I



know the man too well. This is the means—one of the means—to the end he has pursued so relentlessly. It may be the last that he can employ. If it is, he is all the more dangerous.”

“More dangerous?” repeated Mr. Harlowe. “I do not follow you.”

“If he should fail to secure my surrender,” said the countess, “I would be safe in my residence in this country, would I not?”

“Yes, unquestionably,” replied Mr. Harlowe, not yet perceiving the direction of her thoughts.

“Then it may be said that this is his last effort—his last resource. Is that not logical?”

“True; but why is he the more dangerous?”

“Because, having staked his all upon his last card, he will do so with the recklessness of an unscrupulous gambler. Let us not forget the man. He is tenacious of his purpose beyond any man I ever knew, or heard, or read of. He made Russia a hell to me; he followed me to France, and drove me to America; and you know how relentless he has been here. All in pursuance of his end. What he has done he will do. As he has not failed to use the most unscrupulous means in the past, when his resources were many, at what will he stop when he has but one, and that his last? To all that he has done will he add recklessness? Yes, all the lies, the frauds, the tricks he can think will serve his purpose—these will he employ.”



"But we can bring him into the courts to sustain his position."

"Ah!"

"He will be forced to contend that the treaty is retroactive, and under it crimes or offenses committed prior to the date of the convention can be considered."

"Ah!" The tone was hopeless, incredulous.

"The courts must construe the clauses."

"You do not know upon what charges the demand is based. Be prepared for any ingenuity."

While Mr. Harlowe marveled at the calmness and self-control of the lady, at the absence of anything like panic, yet he thought she was more affected by the news at that time, when it first came upon her, than she would be later, after she had become accustomed to its contemplation. He said this. But she shook her head.

"No," she replied; "there has been no time since the treaty was confirmed that I have not been prepared for just this moment."

Dale fairly writhed in his chair. It was such condemnation of his blunder, and showed him so clearly what a disaster she regarded the failure of those plans; how hopeless she was now as to the end. But the countess was not thinking of him.

"Surely," asked Mr. Harlowe, fairly frightened by her pessimism, "you do not mean to supinely yield to the demand—without struggle?"



The countess looked at him and smiled. He could not read the meaning of her eyes. They seemed to be reading him—to express thoughts and emotions not germane to the subject which should wholly engross her. He felt a pathos in them which was not out of a self-pity—a greatness which had lifted her above herself; and withal there was such trustfulness of him—such kindness for him.

She leaned forward and placed her hand upon his.

“My friend, I shall not desert you in your battle for me,” she said. “I will make the supreme struggle. I will never go back to Russia. Prince Kroupiève shall not be triumphant.”

She smiled ineffably, and on her face were calmness and restfulness.

Dale did not comprehend, but he was inexpressibly moved; as he struggled to suppress his emotion he looked at Mr. Harlowe, and was shocked by the expression of intense pain pictured on his brother-in-law's face.

“Come!” she cried, changing her mood and springing to her feet. “I am yet free. The Stars and Stripes still wave their protection for me. We will to dinner. You will dine with me—both of you? It may be the last dinner I can offer. Come! We will be merry! We will drink wine! What was it those brave fellows in India drank to?”



Fine fellows! We will drink to the next who is dead! Come!"

Harlowe started up in horrified protest; but a servant came to say that the note to the prince had been delivered, that Miss Flossie Dale impatiently awaited her father, and that dinner would be served when madame ordered it.

The announcement served as a diversion.

"Is Flossie here?" asked Harlowe, turning to Dale eagerly.

"I had forgotten she was waiting for me—yes."

"Then bring her here," commanded Mr. Harlowe, purpose sounding in his tones.

But there was no need to go for her. Flossie herself appeared in the door, pouting and complaining. She had a grievance against her father, which had to give way to another at once.

"You must remain here and dine with the countess," said Mr. Harlowe decisively. "And you, too, Dale. I must go now."

"Dine with the countess!" exclaimed Flossie in an injured tone. "Why, I'm not dressed for dinner—am I, countess?"

The countess went to the pouting Flossie and put her arm affectionately about the girl as Mr. Harlowe said impatiently:

"Never mind the dress. Do as you are told."

To Dale, whom he drew apart, he said:

"Do not leave the countess. If you were ever



gay—ever amusing—be so to-night. Laugh, sing, dance—do everything but let her think. A time has come when you can be of use. I'm going."

He walked out of the room and house hastily.

"Then we'll dine without our good friend," said the countess with a gayety which was contradicted by a suppressed sob in her throat. "Come, *mes enfants!* Come! Let dinner be served."

Mr. Harlowe, a prey to conflicting emotions, hastened to the hotel where he was living. As he entered the general parlor he encountered Melinda. She was clad as if she had but just returned from the street.

"Oh! you are here!" she cried excitedly. "I have been searching for you. A demand has been made for the extradition of the countess."

"Yes; I know!"

"You have heard it? From whom?"

"Dale!"

"Ah! He found you, then. He told me, and I sent him after you—told him where you would be found, most likely."

Mr. Harlowe made a gesture of protest that had more of weariness than impatience in it, and sat himself in a chair without reply.

"Is it serious?" asked Melinda.

"I don't know," replied Mr. Harlowe. "I do not know on what charge the demand is based."



"What charge would be serious?" she persisted.

"Oh, I don't know, Melinda," replied Harlowe despondently. "Perhaps it is not serious at all. There is an obstacle to be overcome in any demand that is made for her. The allegation, since she has been a resident in this country for six months prior to the date of the treaty, must be as to offenses committed prior thereto. That makes a difficulty for them and a ground for defense for us."

"Chester!" said Melinda, going to him and laying her hand on his shoulder; "Chester! it *is* serious."

"Oh, yes!" he said, thinking her words conveyed nothing more than apprehension. "In its mildest aspect it is serious."

"But this demand is serious; I know it."

He looked up inquiringly, puzzled.

"The allegation is as to offenses committed since the making of the treaty," she said.

"Impossible!" He leaped to his feet in his surprise. "How do you know this?"

"I have been out and learned the fact."

"Oh, no!" he said. "You have been misinformed. That can never be."

"I am afraid it is only too true, Chester. Your defense has been avoided—just as it would have been if you had carried out your plans as you wanted them to go."



“ But who was your informant? ”

“ The Attorney General. He is an old friend of mine, you know.”

“ Yes; and it is before him? ”

“ No; I went to him in my anxiety for you. He knew nothing of it, but told me he would inform himself as to the demand, and would tell me if I would return. I have just come back from a second call upon him.”

“ Yes, yes; and he says it is——”

“ Based on the charge that the countess has been conspiring against the life of the Czar from this country, and that, though the crime was originated a year ago, and abandoned by her in her flight, she has renewed it from here recently.”

Harlowe sank back into his chair, overcome.

“ This is devilish in its ingenuity.”

“ The Attorney General says that if you can disprove these allegations you are safe, but that he understands that the proof is very strong.”

“ It cannot be so; there is no proof—mere allegation. The countess has done nothing whatever that can be tortured into proof.”

“ Chester! ”

“ Well? ”

“ The countess will be arrested to-morrow morning.”

“ What? ”

He sprang to his feet again.



“That is an outrage.”

“The Attorney General says that it can be made to be a constructive arrest. I don’t know what that means, only that she can remain in the house if you will make yourself responsible for her appearance when she is wanted.”

“Ah!”

“If you will go to him to-night quietly he will tell you how. He says he ought not to do this, though he will because I am so anxious.”

Harlowe caught his sister’s hands and pressed them.

“You are very good, Melinda; you have performed a real service.”

“Then let us go to dinner, and afterward I will go with you to the Attorney General’s house.”



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE DIE IS CAST.

THE demand soon became commonly known, and divided Washington society into two camps—one choosing to accept allegation for conclusive proof, and assuming that all that was charged was true; the other becoming heated partisans of the countess, and denying that so sweet and winsome a woman could be involved in such dark deeds as were alleged. It did not follow that all of those who believed the charge to be true ignored her; to some it seemed to increase her charm. There were a few—the administrative departments, notably the State—who became conspicuous by their absence, but the significance of their absence was lost when the Secretary of State attended, with his family, her second grand dance, invitations to which had been issued previous to the making of the demand. Indeed, the representatives of foreign powers were present, except, as was frequently pointed out, not a Russian was there—not even Prince Kroupiève, who had been previously so assiduous in his attentions. But



that was answered by the statement that the prince had left town on the day the demand had been filed, and had not since returned to the capital.

The ordeal was severe, but the countess did not flinch from it. No one ever saw her more gay, more gallant in her bearing, nor more unconcerned as to the future, than she was in those days. If some, presuming on the intimacy she had encouraged, spoke of the pending demand, she laughed gayly, saying, while vouchsafing no denial, that she supposed that it did give her dear friend and counsel much trouble.

Her ball was voted to be the most brilliant of the season, and it was admitted that her *toilette* surpassed all. It was undoubtedly illogical, but from these facts the conclusion was that a lady who could conceive and execute so brilliant a ball and so brilliant a *toilette* could not be concerned about her extradition, and that therefore she had nothing to fear. So, before the day of examination arrived opinion had settled into the conviction that no other result could be had than the denial of the demand.

Mr. Harlowe, however, did not conduct himself as if he were so convinced. He had sent for Tom Bentley again, to Flossie's great satisfaction, and the two were busily engaged in the preparation of a defense which should go to the proof of



the innocence of the countess of the charges preferred.

"Tom," said Mr. Harlowe one day at the close of their labors, "I could dispose of this case in a jiffy if I could only set up the motive of the demand."

"Why can't you?" asked Tom.

"Simply because I want the justification. Kroupiève does not put his head forward anywhere in the proceedings. But I will get it in for effect somewhere, somehow, by hook or by crook. He's a keen fellow. It was to make the statement appear incredible that he was the most constant attendant at the entertainments of the countess."

But the day came for the examination, and with it came a great shock and surprise to both the countess and her counsel. The countess was in attendance; she could not avoid it. Her friends filled the room, and they heard for the first time that the countess had been found guilty in the Russian courts only a few weeks previously of conspiring against the life of the Czar, by being a member of, and supporting with funds, a secret society whose object was to assassinate the Czar. There was a shudder that ran over the fashionable people when they heard the charge, and learned that it was upon this charge that the demand for surrender was made. But it was quieted when Mr. Harlowe rose and said with emphasis:



“ We deny each and every allegation.”

Neither he nor the countess, however, was prepared for the proof that was offered. It consisted largely of the evidence given before the court in Russia. A transcript of the finding of the court was first offered; then the proof. This set forth the existence of the society and its aim; the membership of the countess; of the members of her family; of the overt acts of the society; of its discovery, the seizure of some of its members, and the flight of others, among whom was the countess; of the trial of the countess after her flight to America, her notification to appear and defend herself, and her refusal; her conviction and her sentence. Then Russia's representative, admitting that so much as had been proved did not constitute a basis for a demand for surrender, went on to prove that since the promulgation of the treaty the countess had engaged, by correspondence and messengers, in the organization of another society having the same purpose, which was wholly supported by funds furnished by her; that she had formally and in writing accepted membership; and that when, by the processes of the ballot, she had been chosen to be the instrument of the death of the Czar, she had by a cipher letter accepted the fatal assignment, and announced her return to Russia for that purpose. All this offer of proof was supported by the testimony of agents brought from Russia for



the purpose, by reports made to the Third Division of the Imperial Police, certified copies of which were offered; and finally by what purported to be her letters, among which were some genuine letters of the countess, which had been seized from the few correspondents she had retained.

The countess and Mr. Harlowe sat aghast at the unfolding. In burning indignation he declared that he had never heard of or read in the records of ancient or modern times such a structure of perjury, forgery, and infamy, and was sharply called to order. The countess denied all and everything from the stand, under oath; all allegations of affiliation or identification with the movement—all save her letters, which she explained; but it was clear that the ingenious manner in which the forged letters were made to fit into those that were genuine, and give a false and sinister meaning to them, had had their effect, and on the friends of the countess, too, who had been her stanchest adherents.

While Mr. Harlowe strove to offset by proof this overwhelming avalanche of fraud, perjury, and forgery, he relied mainly upon the contention that nothing had been offered that constituted a basis for a demand for extradition. His premise was thus simply stated:

“We deny every allegation here set forth. The person under demand has been all her life, and is now, as all of the members of her family have been



for many generations, a faithful and loyal subject of the Czar. But if she were guilty of every one of the crimes and offenses that have been here falsely and perjurally alleged against her, there is yet wanting a basis for demand. None of the crimes alleged against her as committed prior to the date of the treaty serve as such basis. The opposing counsel admits that. All of the crimes alleged to have been committed since the promulgation of the treaty, even if true, were committed not in Russia, but here in America. The alleged crimes for which she has been convicted in Russia were committed, if committed at all, prior to the date of the treaty, or here in America, where they were not subject to the jurisdiction of the Russian court. To determine that the countess is subject to a demand for surrender is to impose upon this court a determination as to whether a crime has been committed in any of the acts alleged, and, if committed, they were committed by the countess; a proposition taking this court into functions it does not possess."

Upon these premises Mr. Harlowe builded an argument so powerful as to convince his auditors apparently. Before he finished he set forth in dramatic and startling form the motive, not even concealing the name of the person inspiring the persecution of the lady, and did not fail to set forth the



fact that a surrender upon the grounds urged was the making of a most dangerous precedent.

The address of Mr. Harlowe won him praise and applause, and from no one more sincerely and earnestly given than from the countess. It was generally believed that Mr. Harlowe had won the day. When argument was ended the Commissioner declared that he would take the papers and consider the case, first instructing counsel to send up their briefs, giving them a week in which to do so. Long before the Commissioner reached a decision, the case, which had been for several days a sensation, ceased to receive mention.

Indeed, from so many sources and such distinguished men did Mr. Harlowe receive the assurances that his argument was unanswerable that he was finally lulled, as was the countess also, into the belief that the decision must be as he desired it to be, to wit: That there existed no grounds for a demand for surrender.

In this belief, having promptly handed up his briefs, he returned with increased ardor to his scientific experiments and investigations, discovering a relation between a chemical product and a certain emotion he had not before dreamed of. He was very happy in these days; and the countess was more than gracious, calling him, almost profanely, her savior. And she gave a dinner party



at which he was the distinguished guest—a party which, though it was unannounced, was understood to be in conspicuous recognition of his services to her, and at the board of which sat the most distinguished she could gather.

What, then, must have been the consternation when this peaceful, happy time was rudely broken in upon with the announcement that the Commissioner had found that the evidence submitted constituted a sufficient ground for a demand for surrender, and that the countess must be yielded up to Russia.

It was no compensation that the decision was heartily condemned—that the legal lights stood aghast at it. When its terms were examined it was found that Mr. Harlowe's contention for the principles involved had received practically no consideration at all, but that the evidence alone had been made the basis of a conclusion. The decision was clearly a bid for an appeal to the higher courts, where the principles could be considered and construed. Indeed, there were rumors immediately spread that high authorities had interfered to that end; that the question might at once be carried up and definitely settled.

Mr. Harlowe hastened to the countess to assure her that the battle was not yet lost or won to find her, as she had ever been at the periods of their reverses, calm and self-contained.



“My friend,” she said, laying her hand upon his, a favorite gesture when earnest with a friend, “whatever befalls me, there will always be the sweet consolation of your devotion and sympathy. What more is yet to be done or can be done, that I am sure you will do. I am in the hands of Fate. And now I begin to think, so strangely have all things conspired to defeat our aims and our efforts, that Fate has in store for me a future which can only be approached through these disasters. I do not despair.”

Two courses of procedure were open to Mr. Harlowe: one, to immediately appeal from the decision, and carry the question up to the highest court, or to permit the matter to go to the President on a demand for requisition papers, and then to appeal to the President to exercise his discretion and refuse them.

All of his instincts as a lawyer impelled him to the former of these courses. While he was yet meditating upon the matter, a distinguished jurist, one famous in international practice, called upon him.

“Mr. Harlowe,” he said, “I have taken the liberty of calling upon you and offering unsolicited, a suggestion. If my interference is offensive, a word will make me withdraw with apologies.”

Mr. Harlowe having assured him that no offense would be taken, he went on:



“It relates to this case of extradition in which you are engaged. I heard your argument, and believe that you stated principles therein which should be controlling. The decision made is an outrage, not upon the ground on which it is generally condemned, but upon the ground that the consideration of the principles was shirked—shamelessly shirked.”

“I have meditated an appeal,” replied Mr. Harlowe, “but I have feared a similar shirking of the vital point by the upper courts and a determination upon some lateral or side issue.”

“Just what I feared was in your mind,” replied the jurist. “Your temptation at this point is very great. My suggestion is that you appeal. I think it is your duty—the duty that you owe to the system of jurisprudence in which you are naturally interested, to the advance of which you are bound by your oath. You have a case which is peculiarly adapted for exposition, and I believe that you can so prepare your case that the principles involved cannot be ignored. These questions should be settled, and settled as quickly as possible. To you great honor would accrue in their statement. It is a duty you owe to the country, to yourself, to jurisprudence.”

“You speak of a temptation calculated to divert me from such a course?” said Mr. Harlowe inquiringly.



“Yes; I make no doubt that if you were to permit this matter to go to the President on a demand for requisition that you could persuade him to exercise his discretion in your direction, for public sentiment is strongly with you. You would doubtless put your client more quickly out of her doubt and suspense. That is your temptation.”

“But suppose the upper courts were to take their cue from the lower court and evade the principles, is there not danger of that?”

“I must confess that there is, but as I said before, you can prepare your case so that the evasion would be difficult. Then, you know, you have recourse to the President, even then.”

“But would the President, in the face of three judicial decisions, care to act in defiance of them, or at least, in contradiction?”

“Perhaps not. But let me again call your attention to the strong case you have, in which the presentation of these principles may be made. Such another opportunity may not be presented for years. Give this matter further thought, and with consideration of your high duty in it. If it will not be considered offensive, I will tender my services—without fee, please—as an adviser in the preparation of this case.”

The jurist, the most distinguished of his time, went his way. To say that Mr. Harlowe was not



flattered would be to conceal the truth. But thoughts of self or of aggrandizement did not remain with him.

"This is all very well," he said to himself. "But what about the interests of my client—my duty to her. All this is lost sight of. If I appeal, I stand a chance of having a decision based upon the evidence and not on the principles involved. The courts are not fond of making law. On the matter of 'commerce between the several States,' the appellate court for years evaded the disputed principles, and decided the cases coming before them on some lateral issue."

He thought a long time. Then rousing himself, he spoke aloud:

"He makes no doubt the President would decide in my favor; that public sentiment is running strongly with us. Thank you, Mr. Jurist, you have given me valuable advice; I will act upon it. To the President this case shall go."

He hastened to the writing table and addressed a note to his opponent before the Commissioner.

"I shall not appeal from the decision of the Commissioner. Take your course."

Summoning a servant, he directed a note to be delivered to its address.

"The die is cast," he said. "I hope I have made no mistake."



## CHAPTER VII.

### IN SUSPENSE.

THE demand on the President for requisition papers, the granting of which would enable the Russian party to take the countess into custody, and transport her a prisoner to Russia, was promptly made. As promptly Mr. Harlowe requested permission to file a statement arguing why the President should exercise his discretion and refuse the demand. This permission was granted and a week given him in which to prepare his statement. It was, when completed, a repetition of his argument before the Commissioner, more force and elaboration being given to the principles, and was handed in before the expiration of the allotted time. The other side were given the same time in which to answer. Thus two weeks elapsed before the President was ready to act.

In the meantime, in fact immediately after the decision of the Commissioner was made, Prince Kroupiève returned to town. On his arrival he again preferred a request to be received by the countess to a personal interview, and this time his letter was returned without answer. Notwith-



standing this emphatic notification that the countess desired no further communication with him, the prince presented himself at her next weekly reception. He was politely informed by Pietro that madame did not receive. Inasmuch as people were passing in and out, and there was every evidence that the lady was receiving, the statement of Pietro seemed to be a falsehood. But the prince accepted the statement as it was intended—that the countess would not receive him. So he went away without a word.

But he addressed this note to her, written in the Russian language:

“Madame having twice refused my request for a personal interview, now denies me her house. Even these insults, for such under ordinary circumstances I would take them to be, shall not deter me from warning madame that she is in a precarious—nay, a dangerous position—from which she can be extricated by only one person, and that person is not only willing, but earnestly desirous to perform the services, to exercise the power only he possesses, and who cannot put this saving power into operation until he has had conference with madame, and who, despite the contempt with which he is treated, still signs himself madame’s faithful servant,

“KROUPIÈVE.”



This note was also returned to the prince without reply.

“Mr. Harlowe must still have hopes of success,” muttered the prince as he tore the rejected letter into bits.

Mr. Harlowe did have hopes, but he was not responsible for this act of the countess. The letter had been returned without his knowledge. The countess was reckless and despairing. Everything rested with the President. Kroupiève could only save her, or rather, would only save her, from a loss of liberty by putting her into a worse bondage. Of the two she preferred that loss which would follow the signing of the requisition papers.

Mr. Harlowe's hopes rose with delay in the President's action. Here again, Dale was of use. The President had told him that Mr. Harlowe's paper was a very able one and had raised questions that were difficult of disposal. One day Dale came to Harlowe—it was three weeks after the demand had been made.

“Harlowe,” he said, “your success or failure depends on the Attorney General. Everything turns on a single point with the President. On that point he has asked the Attorney General to give him a written opinion. As he decides, the President will decide.”

“And that point is, what?” asked Harlowe eagerly.



“That I cannot tell you. I went in last night to smoke a cigar with his greatness, and he opened up the talk on this subject, telling me practically what I have told you. He did not put a padlock on my lips, and as he knows I live with you, I think I violate no rules in telling you.”

Mr. Harlowe made a close study of his own argument, in an endeavor to determine what that point could be, and rose from the effort without a conclusion. Very anxious, he sought the Secretary of State, and came away from the interview with a heavy heart and gloomy forebodings. While the Secretary skillfully avoided any mention of the case which Harlowe had so much at heart, he took his friend into his confidence and talked much about impending foreign complications, little of which was known to the public, and which the Secretary was bending all his energies to avert. And at the close of it all, in a few short, terse sentences, he showed Mr. Harlowe how necessary to the States was the favor and friendship of Russia, and on the maintenance of good relations with that empire how much the success of measures already in motion depended.

“And at such a juncture,” muttered Harlowe as he left the Secretary, “the rights of the individual and the claim of friendship will be sacrificed without scruple, if necessary to state intrigues.”



The more he thought of his talk with the Secretary afterward the more he was convinced that, in an indirect manner, his friend had endeavored to prepare him for the worst result.

It never occurred to him that there was anything strange in the treatment he was receiving at the hands of his friends at this period; that Melinda and Dale, even the Secretary, seemed to look upon the failure of his plans as if it were a disaster of moment to himself, and that the countess was hardly thought of; that it was not his defeat as a retained lawyer and attorney, but his deep grief and disappointment as a man, that they considered.

One day about this time he overheard Flossie say to Tom Bentley: "Uncle will never get over his grief, if the countess is compelled to go back to Russia." This awakened him to a fact—to a realization.

"It is true," he said to himself. "I'm too much interested to labor with a clear head and a clear understanding. I will send for Marsters at once. I have, in my anxiety, neglected my inoculation—have neglected my asafetida."

He went out and telegraphed to Mr. Marsters to come to him without delay. Though he immediately began a system of inoculation, he devoted all the means his ingenuity could devise to delay the opinion of the Attorney General, until his part-



ner could arrive. Marsters promptly answered that he would start at once.

The days intervening were sad, anxious, and full of suspense. Although he had approached through various ways the Attorney General, he could not tell what effect his influences had had—there were no assurances of delay given. So he rose every morning after a troubled night, sick with fear and apprehension, lest since last he was upon observation, the opinion had been handed in.

Several days went on in this manner. Mr. Marsters was speeding home, as fast as the means of transportation permitted, cheering Mr. Harlowe with telegrams as each stage was accomplished.

The most difficult of all duties to perform was that of keeping up the courage of the countess. To appear before her, confident as to results, when he was so despondent, was all Mr. Harlowe could do; yet he made a brave effort, and afterward, and in happier times, he used to say no artist of the stage had achieved greater or more sustained acting than he had in those days. He had been spending the evening with the countess, at the time he expected his partner to arrive on the following day. The great ball of the season, that of the British Ambassador, was to occur on the following night. He had found the countess in a hopeless frame of mind, disinclined to be present at



this function, and had only brought her out of her mood and to a promise to attend the brilliant event, with great effort, and a pledge on his own part to be present with his family. Somewhat exhausted by his efforts to maintain a forced gayety, he had retired to his bed on reaching his apartments.

To him, when he was in bed, came Dale.

"Chester," he said, "I have learned something within the last half hour which you should know."

"The President hasn't signed the requisition papers?" he said inquiringly, sitting up.

"Not so bad as that," replied Dale, "but the Attorney General has finished the writing of his opinion."

"What is it?"

"I did not inquire. It would have been of no use. And had I done so, it would have broken a friendship which has been of great value."

"When will it be handed in?"

"That I could ask. Certainly not until day after to-morrow, if then. My informant—you can guess who—says that it was only completed to-night, and will be given to the typewriter to-morrow morning. To typewrite it will take at least all day, as it is very long, and then, in all probability, the Attorney General will give it, according to his custom, a thorough revision, probably necessitating another typewritten copy."



“The end then is here,” said Mr. Harlowe nervously, “and Marsters will arrive only to be in at the death.”

There was no more sleep for him that night. He sat over the fire in his pajamas, silent, despondent, full of forebodings, trying to project his own future, until the rising of the sun told him it was time to prepare for the last assault.



## CHAPTER VIII.

### AN AMBASSADORIAL BALL.

THE ball of the British Ambassador, cards for which there had been much pressure and diplomacy exercised, had been long anticipated. It was expected to be the last grand event of the season, and many who had spent the winter in struggles for social position felt that they would be crowned with success or marked with failure, as they were present or absent from the affair.

The Countess Naletoff did not know, nor perhaps would have cared, had she known, except as her attendance furthered the plans of her counsel, that whether or not her card should be sent had been made the subject of diplomatic conference. However, when the matter was delicately broached, both the Russian Embassy and the State department saw no reason why the peculiar position the countess occupied should as yet operate to her social ban. And the Secretary emphasized his position by asking for cards for Mr. Harlowe and his family, which, it may be remarked in passing, included Arthur Melchor; Melinda having returned to the prosecution of her favorite plan,



and brought Melchor on again as an offset to the presence of Bentley.

Mr. Harlowe was in a condition of nervous excitement and agitation over the impending culmination of his long battle, almost pitiable to behold. He had, early on the morning of the day on which this diplomatic ball was to be held, confirmed the truth of Dale's communication of the night previous, through his own sources of information, and had become convinced that at least two days would intervene before the decision was transmitted to the President. Mr. Marsters was an old friend of the Attorney General, and he felt that, even if Marsters were to arrive only twelve hours before the transmission, very much could be accomplished, in first discovering what that decision was, and if against them, then by the presentation of an opposing argument.

If he had been anxious to have the countess attend this ball, he was doubly so, now that he knew that the culminating event was so near at hand, and especially because he had learned that, contrary to custom, the President would attend the ball. The President and the countess had never met at a time when their intercourse could be anything but fleeting. Here he hoped to bring her under the especial notice of that high dignitary, who, if not a squire of dames, at least was not insensible to female charms. And, in Mr.



Harlowe's opinion, no woman was so charming as the countess.

"I am to conduct a campaign to-night," he said to Dale when they were preparing for the great event. "I hope you will put yourself at my disposal, for I can make great use of you."

It might be supposed that Mr. Harlowe would be gloomily preoccupied with the thoughts of the stake for which he was playing, but, upon the contrary, his nervous excitement operated to give him the semblance of that gay vivacity which was his superficial characteristic. It was in this mood, gay and excited, that he went off to attend the countess to the British Residence, leaving Dale to escort Melinda and Flossie.

In the cloakroom Dale met the Secretary of State, and found his use almost immediately. Together they sauntered toward the ballroom. On their way they were seen by Rodion Michaelovitch, whom the prince had put on duty there when he found that the countess would be present, and who, unobserved, followed them. To Rodion there was something highly significant in the fact that the head of the Foreign Department was arm in arm with the brother-in-law of the counsel of the Countess Naletoff. But Dale was merely telling a humorous story, over which the Secretary of State was much amused. As they reached the ante-room where Dale was to wait for



Melinda and Flossie, Mr. Williams stopped, saying:

“That’s a good one, Dale—an excellent story. I must remember it, to repeat it myself as Dale’s last. But how is it with you and my good friend Harlowe now?”

Dale, slightly confused, for he knew to what the Secretary was referring, hesitated a moment, and then, with an effort at lightness of manner, asked:

“You refer, Mr. Secretary, to that—ah, well—little mistake in the treaty matter?”

“I heard that Mr. Harlowe was very angry,” said Mr. Williams, entertained by Dale’s manner.

“Angry?” repeated Dale. “He was a cyclone. It was an awful blunder, wasn’t it? Oh, well! I’m restored to favor.”

“Poor Harlowe!” laughed the Secretary. “It was bad. Could he have made his point, he would have delayed the treaty. But you——”

He burst into hearty laughter, and added:

“He really thought you had asked for the Chief Justiceship. Well, after all, you didn’t come off so badly. It made you a civil magistrate. We shall have to call you judge now.”

Dale made a comical gesture of protest.

“Please don’t!”

“No?” said the Secretary. “The honor, then, is sufficient? Well——”

He stopped short, looked significantly at Dale,



and then spoke most impressively, measuring each word:

“Those who oppose the extradition of Countess Naletoff have no time to lose.”

Dale looked up quickly and sharply in an endeavor to penetrate the meaning of the Secretary. Mr. Williams immediately changed his tone, with a laugh:

“So you have determined to retire permanently from diplomacy?”

“I do not shine in it,” replied Dale. “I have never cultivated the art of verbal prestidigitation.”

The Secretary, laughing heartily, moved off toward the ballroom, with the remark:

“Dale, you are incorrigible. Verbal prestidigitation! That is good!”

“I presume he meant something by that remark,” said Dale to himself. “Hum! Why couldn’t he have said it plainly, then?”

Rodion entered the room unobserved by Dale, who summed up his thoughts aloud:

“When a man becomes great he is afflicted with a parsimonious regard for words. Rule for greatness in America: cultivate a dignified demeanor and a poverty of tongue. But I’ll find Harlowe and tell him.”

“Ah! my good friend Dale!” exclaimed Rodion, obtruding himself.



Dale recognized him with a start, wondering what the spy did there.

"My friend Dale does enjoy the felicity of amusing the great men," said Rodion gayly.

"A felicity," answered Dale with a trace of bitterness in his tone, "I enjoy in common with the clown in the circus."

"The distinguished man did laugh with much heartiness at your witticisms," persisted Rodion, bent on persuading Dale into a conversation. "Come! Repeat the conversation, that I may laugh, too."

"Impossible, my dear Rodion. The Secretary made a confidential communication." And he muttered under his breath: "At least, I can worry the Russian, if nothing more."

The entrance of Flossie prevented Rodion from prosecuting his search for information.

"I have been looking everywhere for you."

Rodion went off muttering:

"The Dale is cautious, but I will inform the prince."

"I left Aunt Melinda gossiping with some old crony in the dressing room, and even went into the ballroom alone, looking for you."

"What is it?" asked her father. "A partner for a dance?"

"Partners, indeed! I was only in the ballroom a few moments, and look!"



She held up her dancing card. Dale took it from her, reading it:

"Full to overflowing," he said. "Bentley, Vignaux, Bentley, Gordon, Bentley—hum!—Bentley, Bentley, Bent—Flossie, it occurs to me that Mr. Bentley is a frequent sort of a young man here."

"Now, don't be poky, dad," cried Flossie, snatching the card from her father. "Aunt Melinda can do all that for the family—and that's what I want you for. She says that Arty—Melchor, you know—has come to Washington just because of me, and that I must show him attention."

"You must?" queried Dale.

"And he follows me about like a leech."

"That is a very remarkable fact in natural history—a leech follows a person."

"Oh, well!" impatiently cried Flossie, "sticks like one, then. Won't you rid me of him?"

"I might murder him," said Dale thoughtfully. "There are some objections, however. It is against the law, and I am a magistrate."

"Oh, dad!" pleaded Flossie, "do be serious, because, you know, this is important. There's Tom, you know; this—he's here——"

"Yes, I know—here, there, everywhere. Tom's a very ubiquitous young man. I'm jealous of Tom, and——"



"Get uncle to inoculate you," broke in Flossie. "He has a remedy for jealousy—cocaine. But, seriously, you know—Tom is going home soon, and Aunt Melinda won't let him come to our house; and—well, don't you see—because—oh, how can you be so mean? You're the only one I've got to help me, and you're just stuffy to-night—there!"

"Flossie," said Dale, taking her hands, "I'll be neither poky nor stuffy. I'll shunt Melchor off the track."

"Oh, will you?" she cried, delighted. "What a dear, delightful dad you are!"

The strains of the orchestra floated in from the dancing hall, and Flossie whirled about the room in response to them in a graceful dance, with features not usually observed in a private ball-room. For a time Dale observed the graceful motions of his daughter, and then, catching the spirit, joined in. Melinda, followed by Melchor, entered to find them thus engaged, to her horrified astonishment.

"Flossie! James Dale!" she cried in disgust.

Father and daughter ended their dance with sudden abruptness.

"I'm astonished," said Melinda in her most stately and severe manner. "No, I'm humiliated. Arthur, take Flossie, and don't lose her again."

"Mother says I must not be too anxious," re-



plied the vacuous youth. "But if you say I must, I will."

He offered his arm to Flossie, saying to her:

"There are not many persons in the conservatory. I can't lose you there."

Flossie took his arm with a hopeless air of resignation, and together they went into the conservatory.

"James Dale," said Melinda to him, "you are incorrigible."

"That's very singular," returned Dale. "Do you know that the Secretary of State holds the same opinion?"

"Give me your arm and take me into the ballroom," said Melinda; and, as he did so, asked: "Will you never learn sense, James? Suppose someone had seen you dancing?"

"Well," replied Dale, "isn't that what we came here for?"

They entered the ballroom watched by Tom Bentley, who had approached by another door.

"That cat," said Tom, "with the ingenuity of the devil or Kroupiève, keeps Flossie out of my reach. In the meantime, I must watch for Martsers; Harlowe is as wild for him to come as I am to find Flossie."

He passed out of another door in time to escape Mr. Harlowe, who came from the ballroom, whither he had taken the countess.



“What can keep Marsters?” he exclaimed. “He ought to have been here now—half an hour ago. Great chances are being lost.”

At the moment Mr. Marsters entered.

“Oh, John!” cried Mr. Harlowe, rushing to him, “you are here at last. I thought you would never come.”

“My train was an hour late. So the countess is under demand of extradition?”

“Yes; and it is because of her that I want you so badly. You got my statement of the case as it stands?”

“Yes, and have read it carefully—understand it all. That is a very strong paper of yours, Harlowe—the one you filed with the President—very strong.”

“Not strong enough, I fear.”

“Why—has the President acted?”

“No; as I told you, the President has referred the matter—rather a single point—to the Attorney General for an opinion. Everything depends on that decision; and that is written, and may be handed in to-morrow.”

“Ah! Is it as close as that? You should have sent for me before.”

“Yes; that is just what I ought to have done. But it is not yet too late to do something. The Attorney General is here, or will be here soon. You know him intimately—he is your warm friend.



I must know what this point is, and what his decision is. Throw yourself in his way; engage him in conversation on it—push it at him. Listen to what he says; and if he is against it, combat him and unsettle him so that he will hold back until we can get at him in a strong way. Here's my brief on all the points raised. Take it with you and go into the library, where you can look it over alone."

He handed the papers to Marsters, fairly pushing him away.

"Rather a short time to get up an argument on so important a matter!"

"Short or long, it must be!" cried Harlowe as Mr. Marsters disappeared. "Now, that that is in motion, I must find the countess. She has work to do to-night."

He hurried into the ballroom.



## CHAPTER IX.

### DOUBTS, FEARS, AND PLOTS.

RELEASED from his duty of watching for Mr. Marsters, Tom Bentley began a search for Flossie. He had looked in every room, but it had not occurred to him that she was in the conservatory, imprisoned with Arthur Melchor. In his search he entered the ante-room in time to see Flossie reappear on the arm of Melchor.

"Ah!" exclaimed Tom. "She's been with that Melchor baby. How bored she looks!"

"It is very stupid in that conservatory," said Flossie to Melchor, not perceiving Tom.

Melchor was possessed with an idea.

"Mother says that no place is stupid when people love," he said, not appreciating that if his mother's aphorism was true, he had proof in her remark that Flossie did not love him.

"What does she say when people hate?" viciously snapped his companion.

Before he could reply, Tom advanced to her rescue.

"Good-evening, Miss Dale," he said. "Mr. Melchor, Miss Harlowe has been inquiring for you."



"Ya-as—I've seen her."

"But not since I have," urged Tom. "She is very anxious."

"Is that so?" asked Melchor, manifesting as near an approach to curiosity as was possible for him. "Where did she go?"

"In that direction," replied Tom, pointing unblushingly in a direction away from the ballroom. "You certainly should find her."

"But she said I was not to lose Flossie again."

"I presume Miss Dale will await your return here," replied Tom indifferently.

"Oh, of course!" acquiesced Flossie. "Certainly!"

"Sa-ay! You watch her. Don't you lose her."

And he went off in the direction indicated.

Prince Kroupiève, followed by Rodion, came into the room hurriedly.

"There is the prince," said Tom to Flossie. "He evidently wants the room, and it would be impolite to deprive him of it. Come!"

He led her into the ballroom, Flossie receiving a polite bow of recognition from the prince as she passed him.

"What is this you tell me?" asked Kroupiève.

"I did see the Secretary of State, Mr. Williams, send a message by Dale. It was a warning, and I did hear the Dale mutter he would tell Harlowe."

"Ha!" muttered the prince. "The Attorney



General is to give an opinion. Ha! Can it be of that? And the countess is here—a distinguished figure. Ah, ha! The Harlowe does manage well. He is a foeman to be respected.”

He lost himself in thought for a moment.

“Ah!” he said suddenly. “The sister of Harlowe! She is jealous of the countess. I will carry the war into Afric. Ha, Rodion! Find me someone to present me to Miss Harlowe.”

“It is easy to do,” said Rodion, as he went off to obey the command of the prince.

“The contest draws to a close,” said Kroupiève aloud. “A few days and I triumph, or for the first time Prince Alexis Kroupiève fails in an undertaking.”

Melchor had come back from his fruitless search for Miss Harlowe.

“I can’t find Miss Harlowe,” he exclaimed, thinking the prince to be Tom. He discovered his mistake in a moment, and looked for Flossie; she was not there.

“Why,” he said in mild surprise, “Flossie’s gone. She’s got lost again. Sa-ay,” addressing the prince, “did you see where that young lady who was here went to?”

“No, no!” replied the prince shortly, engrossed in his own affairs.

“Are you a waiter?” asked Melchor.

“Me?”



The prince turned haughtily to Arthur, and saw a young man upon whose face there was no expression of any kind by which to judge whether or not the question had been asked as an insult.

“What, sir,” he asked after a moment of severe scrutiny—“what, sir, justifies *you* in supposing *me* to be a waiter?”

“Ha-ay!” languidly replied Arthur, summoning with great deliberation enough energy to give a reason. “You’re one of those foreign fellows. If you are, I wish you’d find her. She’s got lost.”

“Idiot!” was the prince’s characterization, as correct as terse, turning from him to meet the dancing eyes of Dale, who had come in time to hear the brief colloquy.

“Mr. Dale,” drawled Arthur, “have you seen Flossie?”

“Yes; in the ballroom with Mr. Bentley.”

“I’ll find her,” said Arthur in a tone which implied that he was conferring a favor on someone.

The prince watched him as he left the room, and then asked Dale who his friend was.

“An animal classified as an ass and labeled a fool.”

Kroupiève laughed.

“I agree with you,” he said. “His discrimination is *so* keen. He judged me to be a waiter.”

Then, thrusting his arm under that of Dale, he added:



“My friend, present me to the sister of Mr. Harlowe.”

“To Melinda!” exclaimed Dale, genuinely astonished. “Great Heavens, but here is a capture! Prince, it is only the rash who are brave.”

“You are facetious,” said Kroupiève. “I admire the lady.”

“So do I—a long way off. But come along. I’ll balk no chances of Melinda.”

“Your merriment shall not deter me,” answered the prince.

Laughing together, they went in search of Melinda. As they crossed the floor of the ballroom, they met the countess on the arm of Mr. Harlowe. For an instant the prince stopped as if he would address the lady. She, however, had perceived their approach first, and her attention was engaged in another part of the room so ostentatiously that the prince, fearing to risk a decided cut in a crowded ballroom, passed on with a bow.

“The prince would have spoken to you,” said Mr. Harlowe, “had you given him the opportunity.”

“Yes,” replied the countess, “and I wonder at his audacity. I have returned two of his letters and denied him my door.”

It was the first that Mr. Harlowe had heard of these acts, and he marveled at the courage of a woman who might in twenty-four hours be at the



mercy of the man she had treated with such contempt.

“Where do you lead me?” she asked.

“To some place where we can converse alone, without the sight and hearing of the multitude. I have an important matter on which I must speak.”

A circuit of the adjoining apartments found none better suited to his purpose than the one Dale and the prince had just left. Taking possession, Mr. Harlowe somewhat importantly brought forward two chairs, saying as he did so:

“My dear countess, I need your assistance badly. You are a very charming woman.”

There was more in the tone and manner than in the words that caused the countess to look up quickly and apprehensively. He was so formal, so filled with his purpose, and withal, so deferential and gallant.

“Is this to be a declaration?” she asked under her breath and much disturbed—perhaps as much over the idea of the place, as of the fact. Her agitation was discoverable in her voice when she spoke:

“My dear Mr. Harlowe,” she began to protest, “my——”

“A very charming woman!” he repeated, as he placed the chairs with a bow.

“My respect for you is so great that——”



She stopped, not knowing how to complete the sentence, and Mr. Harlowe, catching the tender tone of her voice, realized how she had taken his address, and was embarrassed by it.

“Ah!” he hastened to interrupt. “I’m not foolishly complimenting—that is—it is not trivial gallantry——”

He stopped. He knew he was floundering into the use of words that conveyed the opposite of his meaning, and while confusing himself he was confusing her.

“It is a compliment which becomes greater as it becomes unique.”

Her words had taken the courtly form to which her tongue was accustomed, but she too was aware that she had conveyed a sense she did not intend.

In his embarrassment he floundered on.

“I want to make a purely legal point,” he said. “That’s not it—of course I believe it—I am sincere—but—well just now, I want to premise a fact. You are a very charming woman, with so fascinating a manner as to be irresistible.”

She understood him now, and as well realized that the confusion and embarrassment into which he had been precipitated was because she had presumed hastily to suppose he was leading up to a declaration of his affection. She could have bitten



her tongue out for her maladroitness, but she was steadied by her realization.

"My counsel," she said, sweetly yet with dignity, "does mix much flattery with his business."

"No, no, no!" hastily protesting. "A plain statement of fact. Ah! That isn't what I mean. Yes it is. I mean——"

He took sudden possession of himself.

"Madame, it is the truth, whatever my purpose in stating it."

His recovery of his self-possession put her completely at ease.

"Whatever his purpose, Mr. Harlowe holds of a very unworthy person most flattering opinions."

And with a profound and sweeping courtesy, she seated herself.

"She is irresistible," he said, highly pleased. "But I must protect myself."

"Pardon," he begged aloud, and turning his back, took his syringe from his pocket and injected a drug into his hand.

His act was not unobserved by the lady. She said to herself gravely and kindly:

"How is it that so great and so noble a man can be so eccentric!"

He now turned to the lady with an air of great courtliness.

"Please permit me to state my proposition," he



began. "You are a very charming woman, of fascinating manner, quick mind, and alert tact. I am anxious that you meet the Attorney General and the Secretary of State. Upon them I wish you to exert all your fascinations. Be as lovely as you always are to me—ahem—to everybody—as irresistible—charm them. Our case is to be considered by them shortly, if it is not already under consideration. To their judgment I want them to come with agreeable recollections of yourself. No man is proof against the flattery of the interest of a beautiful woman in himself. I have asked Dale to present you, as it is better for him to do so than for me. He will find—ah! He is here now."

To Dale, who evidently had followed after them as soon as he had discharged the mission requested by the prince, he said:

"Now, Dale, take the countess into the ball-room. Do not fail to present both the Attorney General and the Secretary of State."

Dale laughed as he said:

"The impartiality I maintain in this affair is not to be impeached. I have just introduced Prince Kroupiève to Melinda."

"To Melinda?" cried Mr. Harlowe. "Now what prank is this?"

"No prank," said Dale. "He asked me for an introduction."

Mr. Harlowe was intensely amused.



“Melinda has brought down rare game.”

“Be not deceived!” earnestly urged the countess. “No gallantry inspires the prince. Purpose, deep purpose! He has something to learn—something to gain.”

Mr. Harlowe suddenly became serious.

“This evening, here, the Secretary of State said to me,” said Dale very significantly, “that those who oppose the extradition of the countess had no time to lose.”

“A warning; a warning!” cried Mr. Harlowe, unmistakably alarmed and agitated. “It is Williams’ way of sending it. All the more need for action. Now, like good children, do as I tell you. Countess, do not let Dale fail. Now go.”

He urged them away into the ballroom excitedly. Dale offered his arm to the countess, and as she accepted she said to Mr. Harlowe:

“You alarm me; but I obey trustingly.”

Mr. Harlowe stood looking after them. When he was alone he said aloud:

“If I only could believe that she saw in me—pshaw! Why cry after the moon!”

He dismissed his partly expressed thought with an impatient gesture.

“No man,” he said—“I defy all—could be in daily association with that glorious woman without becoming enamored of her. Yet here am I, bidding her to be as fascinating to other men as



she can be. Why am I so superior to those charms? Why?"

He took from his pocket a vial and a syringe, looking from one to the other.

"Inoculation! Asafetida!"



## CHAPTER X.

### MOMENTOUS EVENTS.

THE room to which Mr. Harlowe had taken the countess for an uninterrupted conference was less frequented, if not almost avoided by the guests and dancers, than any of the others opened to them. It, therefore, well served the purpose of Mr. Harlowe, as a basis of his operations—his campaign, as he had called it to Dale. And now, having dispatched Mr. Marsters on one mission, and the countess upon another, while awaiting the result of his intrigues, he turned to a consideration of that idea which absorbed most of his leisure hours.

With the remark, made to himself, that he feared that he had mixed his vials, he took from his pockets a number of small bottles, placing them on a table in a corner, which was a writing table since there were on it writing materials. The suspense he was under, with its consequent nervous excitement, made it necessary that he should occupy his mind with something; he could not calmly sit down and await developments. He turned to the first thing in his mind, and that naturally was his fad; with equal avidity he would have seized upon anything else that had presented itself.



It was characteristic of the man that action and occupation were needed to relieve or mitigate the tension he was under.

He was busy with his vials when Flossie, hunting for him, came running in.

"Oh, uncle!" she cried, but when she saw the hasty movement with which Mr. Harlowe endeavored to conceal his vials, she asked:

"Why, what are you doing with all those little bottles?"

Reassured, on finding that it was Flossie who interrupted him, he desisted from further attempt at concealment.

"Help me, Flossie," he said. "A great deal depends upon to-night, and I've come prepared for any emergency."

He took up a vial, reading the label and putting it in the right-hand pocket of his trousers:

"Cocaine," he said. "I'll put that here. Give me the others and read the labels as you do."

Flossie picked up a vial:

"Asafetida!" she read from the label. "Ugh! The nasty stuff!"

Mr. Harlowe put the vial in the left-hand pocket of his vest.

"Here," he said. "Right over the heart. That is the proper juxtaposition, since it kills love. But, Flossie, science has demonstrated that love doesn't dwell in the heart."



Though Flossie had sought her uncle with a distinct purpose in view, which was delayed by the service he required of her, she was interested at once.

"But why try to kill love?" she asked. "It is very nice. Codeia!" she read, handing another vial to her uncle.

"Yes," he said, stowing it away in the right-hand pocket of his vest, "you're just young enough to think so. But there are times when its suppression is most necessary."

"Bromide of potassium," read Flossie, handing him another.

"Yes, yes!" said he, placing it in the lower pocket of his vest on the right hand. "To encourage and suppress love at the right times—ah! that is to master yourself."

Flossie handed him another vial.

"Quinine!" she read, and added. "When you really love, you don't want to suppress it."

Mr. Harlowe put the vial in the right-hand pocket of his trousers, as he replied:

"*That* is usually the time when you ought, and," he muttered, "what I have been compelled to do."

"Morphine!" read Flossie.

"Ah!" continued Mr. Harlowe, putting it in the right-hand pocket of the tail of his coat. "But *you* know nothing of love."



Flossie tossed her head, as if to say "Much you know about that," handing her uncle another vial and reading:

"Blue vitriol."

This Mr. Harlowe placed in the other pocket of the tail of his coat, and said:

"Now give me the syringe. I'll put that in my right-hand vest pocket."

Receiving it, he drew a chair to the table and sat down in it.

"I must make a list of the locations of these drugs," he said, preparing to write, "to fix them in my mind. They are great things to have at hand in momentous affairs."

Her father and Tom Bentley stole in quietly at their back. Flossie saw them and exchanged signals with them.

"Uncle!" she said, stealing an arm coaxingly about the shoulders of Mr. Harlowe, now absorbed in his work.

"Yes," he replied, and apparently expressing a thought: "It is time that Marsters came to tell me how he has succeeded."

"I want to ask you something," said Flossie coaxingly, caressing his hair.

"Ask away, Flossie," said he without suspending his writing. "He must have seen the Attorney General by this time."

"Who—dad?" asked Flossie, surprised.



"No, Marsters."

"Oh," exclaimed Flossie. "I want to tell you that dad promised to do something for me—and—and——"

"Well, well, go on, go on—right-hand vest."

"You won't be angry with him if he does, will you?" This very coaxingly.

Mr. Harlowe looked up from his writing into her face. It was covered with blushes.

"Now, you little witch," he said, "what are you driving at?"

"Will you promise me not to be angry with him?" she persisted.

Harlowe was alarmed, he turned in his chair full upon her.

"He hasn't been blundering in this affair again?" he asked anxiously.

"Bother this affair—no!" exclaimed Flossie.

"What has he been doing, then?" queried Mr. Harlowe, much relieved.

"He hasn't been doing anything," she replied, struck with sudden shyness. "It's me."

"You?"

"That's what it's all about. Dad promised to talk to you, if you wouldn't be angry."

"And you want dad to come to me about something you have been doing, and I am not to be angry?"

Flossie nodded her head eagerly.



"Of course I won't be angry; but why don't you speak yourself?"

"Oh, I can't! I'm ashamed," and she danced off to where Dale and Bentley were standing, much interested.

"The wheedling little minx!" laughed Mr. Harlowe as he returned to his writing.

Urged by Flossie, Dale went to Mr. Harlowe.

"Chester," he said, "Flossie has enlisted me in an enterprise."

"So she says," returned Mr. Harlowe, still intent on his writing.

"She wants you to listen to Bentley and not be angry."

Harlowe dropped his pen and turned upon Dale irritably:

"Do you all think that I am a powder cask, ready to explode on the slightest provocation? Bless me! this diplomatic atmosphere breeds contagion. Everybody proceeds by indirection."

"It is absurd, to be sure," replied Dale. "But Bentley wants to say something to you, and I am put forward to insure him a courteous hearing."

"Oh, I'm the very pink of courtesy," said Harlowe satirically. "But must he talk to-night?"

"He must talk to-night or the heavens will fall."

"Anything about the countess—this extradition?" asked Harlowe nervously.



“ Oh! ” said Dale mockingly. “ Something far more important.”

Dale's tone relieved Mr. Harlowe, and he turned to his writing again, saying:

“ Precipitate him, then.”

Dale laughingly turned to Bentley and beckoned to him. Reluctantly the young man came forward, meeting Dale in the middle of the room. Here Dale whispered to him, and, pushing him forward toward Mr. Harlowe, went to Flossie, who, at the door, where she was afforded a speedy escape, stood watching the proceedings with nervous eagerness.

“ Mr. Harlowe! ” said Tom timidly.

“ Hullo, Tom! ” said Mr. Harlowe; and then exclaimed: “ Confound it! I do wish Marsters would come and relieve my anxiety.”

“ I have a matter of some importance to submit—that is to me,” began Tom in much embarrassment.

“ Fire away, my boy! ” and he added to himself: “ I would like to know if the Attorney General has talked at all on the decision.”

“ I have spoken to Flossie—and—she—well, she referred me to you.”

This was so unexpected that Mr. Harlowe was startled, and in his surprise he turned full upon Tom and asked sharply:

“ What's that? ”



His tone, unintentional, had the effect of bracing Tom up, and he blurted out:

"I've asked Flossie to marry me."

Flossie, with a suppressed scream, fled through the door, and Dale after her in an effort to detain her.

Mr. Harlowe gazed at Tom, astounded for a moment, and then rose hastily, and, taking him by the coat, asked in a confidential tone:

"Say, Tom, did it require much courage to—to—pop, you know?"

"Not half so much as coming to you," replied Tom.

"Oh, drop me out of the question!" said Harlowe impatiently.

"Well," said Tom meditatively, "when you're pretty sure of your ground—that is, that the lady is not likely to refuse you—why! it don't require much."

"But, Tom, suppose you don't know your ground?"

"Then I should say it was pretty much of a gamble."

Mr. Harlowe released the lapel of Tom's coat, and thoughtfully stroked his under lip with his thumb and forefinger.

"Gamble!" he muttered. "Hum! Gamble! Yes; that's just what it would be."

"Are you contemplating——"



Mr. Harlowe quickly interrupted him.

"I? I?" he exclaimed. "How could I? Haven't I got Melinda and Flossie to care for?"

"But I want to relieve you of Flossie," urged Tom.

"True! And you want my consent?"

"If you please."

"Have you seen Melinda?"

"Lord, no!" cried Tom. "I particularly don't want to see Melinda."

"She's bent on this Melchor."

"Would you be content with that?" earnestly asked Tom, as if Melchor was some sort of a strange beast.

"No," said Mr. Harlowe firmly and honestly, "I'm hanged if I would! You have my consent. Take her, my boy, take her!"

"Thanks! thanks!" cried Tom, delighted that the ordeal was successfully over. "Her father is with us, and the four of us ought to be equal to Miss Melinda."

He ran away to communicate the happy issue of their intrigue.

"Don't be so sure of that," was the grim rejoinder Mr. Harlowe flung after him.

He sat down, turned to his writing, and turned away again, talking to himself. The strains of the "Love Dream" waltz floated in through the open door.



“Gamble! Yes; he’s right. It would be a great big gamble. Hum! Only Melinda left. Now, if Marsters would only—pshaw! Day dreams! Impossible—hopeless day dreams!”

Melchor came wandering into the room in his aimless way.

“I can’t find her anywhere,” he complained. “Mr. Harlowe, I’ve lost Flossie.”

Mr. Harlowe contemplated the plaintive youth a moment very seriously, and then said heartily:

“Quite right, my boy; you have.”

“Ha-ay? Ya-as, I have,” he replied with his irritating drawl. “I can’t find her.”

“And it is my opinion, given without fee, Arthur,” said Mr. Harlowe seriously, “that you never will. Find Bentley; he’s got her.”

“Ya-as; that’s what Mr. Dale advised me to do.” And Arthur turned slowly to leave the room. As he did so, Marsters, entering hastily, came into violent collision with him, nearly knocking him over. But Marsters was too much absorbed to heed him.

“Harlowe,” he cried, “I’ve just left Melinda, and she says——”

Mr. Harlowe leaped from his seat, and, seizing him by both hands, exclaimed:

“Take her, my boy—take her. You have my blessing!”

Marsters was dumfounded.



"What's the matter with you?" he asked. "When I want Melinda, I'll ask her. She's old enough to answer without your assistance. No, no; this is business. Melinda says that, judging from what the Attorney General tells her, he has not only written his opinion, but handed it in."

"Yes, yes, yes!" rapidly and eagerly.

"And, though she knows nothing yet——"

"Yes, man; yes?"

"Fears the worst."

"What did he say—what were his words?" asked Mr. Harlowe, breathless almost with eager anxiety.

"Little that she can fix; it is the impression she received."

"Bad—bad!" moaned Mr. Harlowe. "But, Marsters, you know that Melinda is down on the countess."

"No, no!" protested Marsters. "You wrong her by that thought. No; she is anxious for your success."

"Have you seen the Attorney General?" asked Mr. Harlowe, a forlorn hope gleaming in his eyes.

"I have had no opportunity."

"Make one, then," said Mr. Harlowe; "make it quick! Don't fail! If this is so, action must be taken at once—this very night. Ask him plump out, if in no other way. I must know to-night."

He fairly pushed Mr. Marsters through the



door into the ballroom, so eager was he. Then he dropped into a chair, almost unnerved.

“If Melinda is right, there is danger—great danger. And I must get to the President somehow to-night.”

So engrossed was he in his thoughts that he did not perceive that Prince Kroupiève and Rodion Michaelovitch had entered the room at his back.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE LAST RESOURCE.

THE two Russians were clearly excited—the manner of the prince that of arrogant triumph. It was clear that he had brought Rodion from the ballroom to give him his instructions.

“Go to the Ambassador,” he said in his most commanding way. “Find him to-night, no matter where. Tell him the papers must be ready early to-morrow morning. Let him not fail in anything. Delay I will regard as a crime.”

“Shall I arouse him if he sleeps?” asked Rodion.

“If he sleeps twenty sleeps.”

“I obey,” said Rodion as he hurried off.

Mr. Harlowe, still unconscious that others were in the room, struggled to his feet.

“I must find the Secretary of State; I must have a word with Williams.”

The act and the words attracted the attention of the prince. As Mr. Harlowe attempted to leave the room the prince intercepted him.

“My dear Mr. Harlowe,” said the prince, a triumphant sneer disfiguring his face, “you do not grace the ballroom?”



It was with difficulty that Mr. Harlowe could control himself and conceal the apprehension caused by the bearing of the prince and the unholy joy that shone without attempt at concealment in his eyes. Mr. Harlowe felt sure that his opponent had learned something which had given him the assurance of success. With a supreme effort he rallied.

"No, prince," he said in his lightest manner, and with a composure he was far from feeling; "no. Rheumatism and Terpsichore are enemies."

"The Countess Naletoff shines refulgent to-night," said the prince.

Mr. Harlowe was distinctly conscious of a feeling that he was being played with as a cat does with a mouse before killing it, but he fought with himself for his self-possession.

"To see so glorious a daughter of Russia," he replied, "first among foreign flowers, prince, must arouse your patriotic pride."

"As gratifying as the sight is," replied the prince with a profound bow, "it would be more pleasing to see her at the court of her own country."

"Since the bonds uniting the two countries have been strengthened by this treaty, surely Russia can trust her fair daughter to us."

"True," replied the prince, with an increased sneer; "especially when America's diplomatic



representative, the Secretary of State, devotes himself to the fair daughter."

Mr. Harlowe knew that the prince, with his customary astuteness, had penetrated the purpose of the attendance of the countess at the ball, but he replied airily:

"The assumption of diplomatic functions, prince, does not lessen appreciation of charming women."

"You are right," said the prince somewhat sternly, "even if the fair one be under demand of extradition."

Then he changed his tone, and, with an admirable assumption of interested curiosity, he asked:

"By the way, Mr. Harlowe, how does that demand proceed? I have great sympathy for the countess."

"I am only her counsel," replied Mr. Harlowe, permitting himself his only sarcasm of the encounter. "One holding such close relations to Russia's representatives as does the Prince Kroupiève should be the better informed."

"You forget, sir, that with the promulgation of the treaty my special functions ceased. I am even now recalled."

Before Mr. Harlowe could reply, and to his annoyance, almost consternation, the countess entered upon the arm of Dale. She was in a gay, even excited mood, and began a remark to Mr.



Harlowe, but, on perceiving the prince, stopped abruptly, and bowed so low before him that her courtesy seemed to be derisive. The prince returned her bow, and without hesitation he advanced to her and said:

“I have been sighing for the opportunity which presents itself at the moment of my despair. Madame has been so surrounded by dignitaries of state that a poor Russian could only gaze from afar off.”

He took it upon himself to offer the lady a chair, but she declined as she replied:

“The prince is not often in the submissive mood.”

“Approach to madame is not so easy,” returned the prince, “that I may pass by the chance fortune offers.”

Mr. Harlowe, standing intent with apprehension, understood the prince's manner to mean that he had learned something of which he proposed to inform the countess, and his suspense was agonizing. Dale, who had remained beside the countess, under the belief that his services as an escort would be required by the countess to take her away from the prince, on seeing her yield to Kroupiève's address, moved to the side of Harlowe.

“What I would say now,” continued the prince, “might perhaps be said elsewhere with greater



propriety—might have been said before, but madame has denied me her house, and opportunity is lacking, while time presses. What I would say should be said to you alone.”

The countess made a barely perceptible gesture, which Mr. Harlowe interpreted to mean that he was to remain. He detained Dale, who moved as if to leave the room.

“The prince is mysterious in his address to-night,” she said.

“I shall not be so,” quickly replied Kroupiève; “rather, brutally frank.”

“Find the Secretary of State for me,” said Mr. Harlowe to Dale, “and ask him to favor me by coming here.”

Dale hurried away to execute the order.

“I have in the past,” continued the prince, “offered myself and the honors of the house of Kroupiève to madame.”

The countess bowed in response, but made no verbal reply.

“The offers have been rejected. Perhaps I should be content. But, madame, in the presence of the great danger which confronts you, though you have declined to dismiss Mr. Harlowe, and because I believe my power can avert the blow threatened, I again place the heart, the hand, and the title of Prince Kroupiève at your feet.”

Mr. Harlowe almost started in his anxiety as



he listened to the reply of the countess, the while his hand played in an ineffectual way over his pockets, as if seeking something, not certain what.

"The motives," said the countess slowly but firmly, "which have controlled me in the past influence me now."

"Madame declines again," said Kroupiève. "Permit me to suggest that she does not realize her danger."

"Were I in Russia, my danger would be great, but here in America——"

"Madame believes she will remain," interrupted the prince. "I would have her consider that she returns to Russia, and view my offer from that standpoint. Between her and Siberia, ruin, and what is far worse than death, is only this hand, which is gladly stretched forth——"

The countess drew herself up with more haughtiness than Mr. Harlowe had ever before seen her show, and with a motion of her hand stopped the prince.

"I do consider," she said, "and I will answer. I refuse under all conditions. I will not clasp in marriage the hand that has assassinated my kindred."

The prince was stung into intense anger by the unexpected conclusion. Savagely and threateningly he cried:

"Madame, beware!"



Mr. Harlowe made a start forward, fearing that in his anger the prince would do violence to the countess, for he had rarely seen a man so convulsed with passion as was Kroupiève. But the countess put up her hand to quiet him.

“I fear nothing,” she said. To the prince, calmly scornful, she continued: “All these were torn from me in the name of the law, but the hand was the hand of Kroupiève.”

“Madame——”

His passion was too great for utterance, and it was plain he was making heroic efforts to control himself.

“If America fails me,” she said, “as you would intimate, I have one resource—I can die.”

The prince managed to gain sufficient control of himself to say with an intense sneer; it was like the hiss of a snake:

“Beautiful women, young and rich, do not die by their own hands. You hope; I can wait.”

Mr. Marsters hurried in, panic-stricken. He exclaimed to Mr. Harlowe:

“It is only too true; and the decision is against you.”

Harlowe was so shocked that he fairly staggered, and the countess started forward to him, as if to give him aid. Kroupiève laughed aloud, sardonically. The laugh gave Mr. Harlowe a counter



shock. He turned an agonized look upon Kroupiève, and said:

“He knew before I did.”

He took a vial from his pocket, fumbled with his fingers, dropped it, and picked it up again.

“Where is Dale?” he asked helplessly.

Rodion Michaelovitch rushed into the room, and took the prince apart from the rest, and whispered energetically to him.

Dale returned at the same moment with Melinda, and followed by Flossie and Bentley, chatting gayly, intent only on their own crowned happiness. Melinda was evidently very angry, and she at once began:

“Chester, have you dared to give your consent——”

But a glance at Harlowe's face showed that a great disaster had fallen upon him. To Dale he said:

“See the President at once, and ask him for a personal interview for me. All is not lost yet.”

“I will go, of course. The Secretary will come here at once.”

Dale turned to leave the apartment, but as he did so the Secretary of State entered. Dale stopped a moment to listen.

Mr. Harlowe fairly flung himself upon the Secretary of State.



“For Heaven’s sake, Williams,” he cried, “tell me the worst, if it is the worst.”

The prince, followed by Rodion, came closer to hear the reply.

“I think—in fact,” said Mr. Williams hesitatingly, and with no little embarrassment, “I know—that the President has reached a conclusion. Perhaps I ought not to speak; but really, Harlowe, I’m very sorry for you—and the countess—charming woman—but the President has determined on her extradition to-morrow.”

All started, visibly and variously agitated, except the countess, who stood motionless, and from whose face all color had fled. The prince and Rodion were openly triumphant. Harlowe was like one partially paralyzed. He took from one of his pockets a vial, dropped it on the floor, and then took another.

“All hope is gone?” he asked in broken accents.

“The President has decided,” the Secretary replied, as if that were conclusive.

“He will listen to one last appeal.”

“The President has decided,” repeated Mr. Williams firmly, though kindly. “That means the end with him.”

Harlowe was overcome. With a vial in one hand, he let his other wander over his coat, as if seeking another; apparently dazed, unable to think, he took his syringe from his pocket. It was as if his



mind was working automatically, and not under the control of his will. He stole a look at the countess, who had not altered her position, but stood as if she had been turned into stone.

Melinda laid her hand upon that of the countess sympathetically an instant, and then, with short, energetic strides, crossed the room to Harlowe. To him she said, and it almost seemed as if in disgust:

“Chester, if you are a man, do something to save her!”

She crossed the room and put her arm about the countess.

“You have my whole sympathy,” she said. “Forgive me!”

For answer the countess flung her arms about Melinda’s neck, and buried her face on the maiden lady’s shoulder.

Harlowe, astounded, stood gazing at the two as if he could not comprehend the scene. Then he sprang suddenly into action. He flung the vial he held in one hand in one direction, and the syringe in another.

“Marsters! Here!” His voice rang out clear and masterfully as he pointed to the table in the corner. “Sit down! Write a declaration of citizenship for the countess.”

“What is that?” asked the astonished Marsters.

“Do as I tell you, quickly.”



As Mr. Marsters seated himself at the table and began to write, the prince exclaimed aloud, most apprehensively:

“What new device of delay is this?”

Dale said:

“I’ll go to the President.”

“Stay where you are,” commanded Mr. Marsters.

A few of the passing dancers and guests, attracted by the group, entered the room, curious observers of a strange scene. The Secretary of State was amused and interested.

“If I know the man,” he muttered, “Harlowe is not at the end of his resources.”

As if answering his muttering, Mr. Harlowe crossed to the countess, took her hand, and said:

“May I speak with you?”

She yielded to him, and he led her to a part of the room where they were alone. His words seemed to astound her, and as he became explanatory he became urgent, and as she hesitated he became more urgent. At length she yielded to his urgency, whatever it was, for she placed her hand in his, beaming upon him a look of intense gratitude. They were watched curiously and intently by all, and by Kroupiève and Michaelovitch most apprehensively.

Mr. Harlowe led the countess back to the group, and she was heard to say to him:



"It is only pity that excites you to such nobility."

"No, no!" he exclaimed. "It is not pity; it is realization."

Then, turning to Marsters, he asked:

"Have you drawn that declaration, Marsters?"

Marsters rose from his chair, saying:

"It is done."

"Sign, countess!" said Mr. Harlowe, leading her to the table. She sat down and wrote her name where Mr. Marsters pointed, Mr. Harlowe standing beside her. When she had finished, he took the paper, and, handing it to the Secretary of State, said:

"You will observe that, Mr. Secretary, and recollect in whose presence it was made and signed."

Then he again took the hand of the countess and led her before Dale, standing mystified by the occurring events.

"Dale!" he cried, "you are a civil magistrate, duly sworn. Marry us!"

"Marry you?" cried all, almost in chorus. Melinda made an impulsive start forward, but was checked by Mr. Marsters, who, seeing at the same time a movement from Prince Kroupiève, upon whose face came a demoniacal expression, then stepped before him in a most threatening manner.

Dale was not found wanting; the surprising



turn of affairs accorded too well with his peculiar humor. With ready wit and presence of mind he began the ceremony:

“Mura Naletoff, do you take this man, Chester K. Harlowe, to be your wedded husband?”

“I do,” replied the countess in a low voice.

“Chester K. Harlowe, do you take this woman, Mura Naletoff, to be your wedded wife?”

“I do,” firmly and loudly declared Mr. Harlowe, and he added: “despite all the Russias.”

“Then,” said Dale, concluding the simple ceremony, “I pronounce you man and wife, and whom the law has put together let no man put asunder.”

“Melinda,” cried Harlowe, “I *have* done something.”

He turned to the Secretary and said:

“Mr. Secretary, tell the President that the countess has made a declaration of her intentions, that she is naturalized, and that I defy him to yield up the wife of an American citizen, and thereby herself an American citizen, on the demand of a foreign power.”

“Harlowe,” replied the Secretary, much amused and much pleased, “your resources as a lawyer are inexhaustible.”

“Yes,” sneered the prince, “but it is a very summary disposal of a subject of my August Master.”

“A subject of the Czar no longer,” said Mr.



Harlowe. "A diplomatist should know that it is established as between nations that the wife takes the nationality of the husband. The countess is now an American queen."

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The President never signed the requisition papers, and Mr. Harlowe never published an exposition of his science. Perhaps he has been too busy with the affairs of the Embassy at Berlin, at which city Mrs. Harlowe is still called the countess.

THE END.



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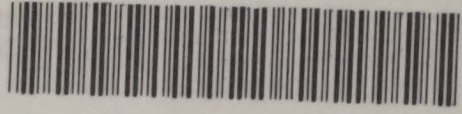








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